

Not a Hospital but a Leprosarium

Basil's Basiliās and an Early Byzantine Concept of the Deserving Poor

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“Go out a little way from the city and behold the new city . . . where disease is regarded philosophically, misfortune considered blessed, and compassion put to the test.” With these words Bishop Gregory of Nazianzus urged residents of Cappadocian Caesarea to appreciate the philanthropic institution that their late bishop, Basil (330–379), had built about a decade earlier (ca. 372) not far beyond their city walls.¹ To judge from a letter written by Basil during its construction (*ep.* 94, discussed below), some in Caesarea had initially opposed his project. Nevertheless, thanks partly to a gift of land bestowed by Emperor Valens, the institution not only survived its founder but continued to operate at least into the middle of the fifth century, if not longer. By then it had become known both near and far simply as Basil’s Place: “the Basiliās, a most celebrated refuge for *ptochoi*.”² Though no trace

of it remains today, the Basiliās evidently inspired similar facilities “for *ptochoi*” in early Byzantium.³ It offers a unique focal point for exploring what Christian *philanthropia*, *ptochoi*, and *ptocheia* (conventionally translated as “philanthropy,” “the destitute poor,” and “poverty” or “destitution”) meant in this early Byzantine context.

Fourth Century,” *Medieval Prosopography* 17 (1996): 54n70. I thank Anthony Kaldellis for confirming this. On the opposition revealed by the apologetic tone of Basil’s *ep.* 94, see R. Finn, *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire: Christian Promotion and Practice (313–450)* (Oxford, 2006), 228–29. On Valens’s gift, see below, pp. 34–35.

3 Although the Basiliās has been assumed to have served as a model for other institutions, the only known replica is the monastic complex founded outside Jerusalem in the late 5th century by the Cappadocian monk Theodosius the Cenobiarch (d. ca. 529): see D. Chitty, *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism* (Oxford, 1966), 109. However, the description of this complex written by Theodore of Petra should not be taken as a guide for reconstructing the earlier institution, because it seems to have been considerably larger (e.g., it included three churches where Basil’s had only one) and aimed to accommodate a wider range of people. It has also been proposed that modern Kayseri, located about two miles away from the site of ancient Caesarea Mazaka, developed around the Basiliās in medieval times: W. M. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire before AD 170* (London, 1904), 464, and G. Bernardakis, “Notes sur la topographie de Césarée de Cappadoce,” *EO* 11 (1908): 25. But this hypothesis has not been confirmed by archaeology and is potentially misleading, since it presupposes that the Basiliās was built on a sufficiently large and permanent scale to attract resettlement.

1 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 43.63.1; J. Bernardi, ed., *Grégoire de Nazianze: Discours 42–43*, SC 384 (Paris, 1992), 262: “τὴν καὶ νήν πόλιν . . . ἐν ᾧ νόσος φιλοσοφεῖται καὶ συμφορὰ μακαρίζεται καὶ τὸ συμπάθες δοκιμάζεται” (see 27–28 for date). Basil describes his facility as “near Caesarea” (πλησίον Καισαρείας, *ep.* 150.3, in Y. Courtonne, ed., *Saint Basile: Lettres*, vol. 2 [Paris, 1961], 74). The traditional date for its completion (ca. 372) is discussed below.

2 Sozomen, *Church History* 6.34.9; J. Bidez and G. C. Hansen, eds., *Sozomène: Histoire ecclésiastique*, SC 495 (Paris, 2005), 432: “Βασιλείαδος, ὁ πτωχῶν ἐστὶν ἐπισημότατον καταγώγιον.” Cf. Firmus of Caesarea, *ep.* 43. Many scholars (including myself) have taken Sozomen’s genitive form (*Basileiados*) as the proper name of the facility, but the nominative (*Basileias/Basiliās*) is correct, as observed by R. van Dam, “Governors of Cappadocia during the

Indeed, more authors mention or describe Basil's Basiliads than any other philanthropic institution of the period. This makes it not only the best-documented but also, seemingly, the best-known Christian foundation of antiquity. Even if none of it can be seen today the Basiliads offers an unparalleled landmark for modern historians studying the emergence of Christian philanthropic institutions in general and of hospitals in particular. Such studies tend to have two common features. First, while acknowledging that Basil's facility only qualifies as a hospital in the most rudimentary, general sense (i.e., a place where sick people stayed overnight), most nevertheless use this modern paradigm to conceptualize its original purpose, no matter how misleading that paradigm might be. Second, following Gregory of Nazianzus's lead, most have reconstructed the physical structure and philanthropic scope of the institution in the most expansive terms possible. Basil's Place has been envisioned as a "Vatican outside the city walls," a "city in itself, with streets of houses," as a "whole range of buildings for the care of the sick and the destitute, and for distribution of surplus food for those in need," as a "multipurpose institution that besides providing care for the sick and poor, also provided rooms for lepers, travellers, and others," and as a "charitable multiplex . . . nothing if not ambitious."⁴ One historian specifies that "the charitable activities of Basil's hospital may be divided into six main areas of activity: care for the poor, strangers and homeless, orphans, elderly or infirm, lepers, and the sick," concluding with the summation, "none of these traditional Christian enterprises . . . had been undertaken on such a grand scale as in Basil's institution."⁵

4 R. van Dam, *Becoming Christian: The Conversion of Roman Cappadocia* (Philadelphia, 2003), 95; J. H. W. G. Liebeschütz, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1972), 240; P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea, Transformation of the Classical Heritage* 20 (Berkeley, 1994), 139; N. Allen, "Hospice to Hospital in the Near East: An Instance of Continuity and Change in Late Antiquity," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 64 (1990): 449–50; P. Horden, "Poverty, Charity, and the Invention of the Hospital," in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. S. Johnson (Oxford, 2012), 716–17. See also S. Scicolone, "Basilio e la sua organizzazione dell'attività assistenziale a Cesarea," *Civiltà classica e cristiana* 3 (1982): 354–55; T. S. Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore, 1997), 86; P. Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Hanover, NH, 2002), 35.

5 A. T. Crislip, "Monastic Health Care and the Late Antique Hospital," in *Holistic Healing in Byzantium*, ed. J. T. Chirban

Almost all of this is a fantasy. While early Byzantine testimony makes clear that the physical structure of the Basiliads did include some impressively large buildings, it also makes clear that these buildings, and the institution as a whole, were constructed to accommodate a much more limited range of people and services than historians have hitherto allowed. In the following pages I claim that Basil's institution was founded neither as a general hospital nor as a charitable multiplex, but instead as a kind of monastic leprosarium where monks and lepers were sequestered together, each supporting the other. Of course previous studies—although not all—have recognized that the Basiliads received and treated lepers.⁶ Yet none have argued, as I do here, that lepers were the central and perhaps sole object of its medical and philanthropic care. To be sure, this runs contrary to the conceptualization of the Basiliads as a charitable establishment meant to serve sick or destitute people in general. But it is the only conclusion substantiated by evidence and possibly makes Basil's project even more innovative and audacious than previously imagined.

In addition to establishing the true nature of this institution, my purpose here is to clarify the ideological rationales behind it. While this is not the place to explore all of its possible theological underpinnings, it is necessary to discuss certain ideas that seem most pertinent to Basil's project both to explain its origins and to reframe our understanding of his motivation. Many historians have assumed that Basil founded his Basiliads as a practical response to humanitarian crises that arose in Cappadocia during his lifetime due to a sudden

(Brookline, MA, 2010), 101; cf. id., *From Monastery to Hospital: Christian Monasticism and the Transformation of Health Care in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2005), 105–20.

6 In their monograph on leprosy in Byzantium Miller and Nesbitt identify the Basiliads as a leper asylum, but insist that it treated other patients as well (as a "leprosarium and hospital"): T. S. Miller and J. W. Nesbitt, *Walking Corpses: Leprosy in Byzantium and the Medieval West* (Ithaca and London, 2014), 30, 90. This enabled Petros Bouras-Vallianatos to assert in the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (2015.01.26) that "evidence for . . . specialist leper asylums is scanty" in this period. To the contrary, the Basiliads provides exactly such evidence. Most scholars recognize that the Basiliads treated lepers. However the possibility was dismissed by J. Bernardi, *La prédication des pères Cappadociens: Le prédicateur et son auditoire* (Montpelier, 1968), 283 ("La Basiliade accueillait-elle les lépreux? Nous n'en savons rien"), prompting a concerted rebuttal from B. Gain, *L'Église de Cappadoce au IV^e siècle d'après la correspondance de Basile de Césarée (330–379)*, OCA 225 (Rome, 1985), 279n36.

outbreak of famine, leprosy, or both. Such hypotheses cannot be dismissed: a famine did strike Cappadocia at some point before the construction of the Basilias, and we know that other Christian authorities not only noticed the plight of lepers in fourth-century Asia Minor but also, like Basil, took steps to house them. Nonetheless in the second half of this essay I will challenge the historical relevance and veracity of these crises, contending instead that the impetus behind Basil's project was primarily ideological. As is well known, the Gospels give Christian leaders a mandate to "heal the sick, cleanse lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons" (Matthew 10:8; cf. Matthew 8:1–4, Mark 1:4–42, and Luke 5:13 and 17:11–19). I argue, however, that Basil was more demonstrably moved by a desire to appropriate the ancient ideal of philanthropia and ameliorate the state of ptocheia. For him this concern was not only evangelical and episcopal but also monastic and personal.

Ptocheia and Philanthropia in Christian Cappadocia

At first this might seem to be saying nothing new. Many historians have explored the ideological significance of philanthropy, poverty, and "the poor" for bishops seeking to promote justice or gain power in the late Roman Empire, with the Cappadocians often taking center stage.⁷ But revisiting Basil's project offers us an opportunity to reexamine what these concepts—especially ptocheia—meant to him and his colleagues. While it has become customary to equate the notion of ptocheia with an abject state of material destitution and philanthropia with the extension of care or kindness to the destitute poor, I will show that the Cappadocians had a more nuanced understanding of both. To them ptocheia meant not so much a state of material destitution (though it often meant that, too) as a loss of worldly prosperity, and philanthropia was not so much extending kindness to destitute poor people (though it often

meant that, too), as extending it to people who did not seem at first to deserve it. I maintain that lepers became the charitable focus of Basil's institution because they represented one of the most dramatic symbols of ptocheia and conclusive tests of philanthropia to be found in his day.

It is impossible to know how far the conclusions or conceptual definitions I draw here would have applied beyond fourth-century Cappadocia. Nonetheless my ultimate goal is to suggest that Basil and his colleagues sought to focus Christian philanthropy, for all its universal implications, on one type of ptochos in particular: not so much on the destitute (though these were not to be ignored) as on "the fallen," i.e., on those people who had come down in the world, having been humbled or brought low by some change in their physical, financial, or social circumstances. For the Cappadocians, such ptochoi—even if relatively rich—were especially deserving of pity. Far from being of less esteem to them than the working poor (as has been claimed), they were to be given special attention when it came to institutional care. I will propose possible reasons for privileging them over others, but the priorities that Basil enshrined in his Basilias suggest we should look for similar priorities in the philanthropy that Christian leaders institutionalized elsewhere in the Roman world.⁸

Early Byzantine Sources on the Basilias and Other *Ptochotropheia*

Gregory of Nazianzus is undoubtedly most responsible for inflating our expectations of the scale and purpose of the Basilias. In the funeral oration he delivered for Basil he describes the facility not merely as "the new city" but as one that rivaled all previous wonders of the world. Yet it must be recognized that this is all that Gregory says about its physical structure and, as Richard Finn proposes, he may well have intended to conjure in his listeners' imaginations "the new city" of Revelation, equating the Basilias with a heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2). In any case, Henri Leclercq long ago observed that Gregory was probably exaggerating

7 In general, Brown, *Poverty and Leadership*, and idem, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison, WI, 1992); for the Cappadocians, B. E. Daley, "Building a New City: The Cappadocian Fathers and the Rhetoric of Philanthropy," *JECChrSt* 7, no. 3 (1999): 431–61, S. R. Holman, "The Entitled Poor: Human Rights Language in the Cappadocians," *Pro Ecclesia* 9 (2000): 476–89, and eadem, *The Hungry Are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia* (Oxford, 2001).

8 The same point has been emphasized for the Latin West (especially in the 4th century) by P. Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton, 2012).

(“le reflet de l’hyperbole orientale”).⁹ To get a more accurate picture of the Basiliads, we must look more closely both at what was said and at what was not said by early Byzantine authors, starting with Basil himself.

Basil mentions the Basiliads in just a few places. His fullest account is contained in a letter (*ep.* 94) that he wrote to an imperial official named Helias, who served as Roman governor of Cappadocia in the 370s.¹⁰ Evidently responding to recent complaints that are unfortunately neither described nor explained, Basil begins by wondering who would object to him “erecting for our God a magnificently designed house of prayer” surrounded by a residence or dwelling (*oikesis*), part of which was reserved for the “principal,” the rest for “attendants of the divine.”¹¹ Basil offers to put this residence at the governor’s disposal should he wish to visit with his staff. He then proceeds to describe the facility’s philanthropic wing. Who would be harmed, he asks, by the “refuges for strangers” (*katagogeia tois xenois*) he is constructing both “for visitors on travel” and “for those needing attendance due to infirmity.” The latter received “necessary consolations” that included not only “physicians, medical practitioners, pack animals, and escorts,” but also “occupations found conducive to the provision of necessities or the refinement of life” and “various buildings equipped with workshops.”¹²

There ends Basil’s entire description. One challenge to interpreting its details is his elevated, nontechnical diction. For example by “principal” (*koryphaios*) Basil probably meant a bishop, but he may have meant an abbot; by “attendants of the divine” (*therapeutai tou theiou*) he may have meant clerics, but to judge from other early Byzantine examples of this phrase,

he probably meant ascetics, i.e., monks.¹³ Similarly it is hard to determine how to interpret his reference to people who needed attention “due to infirmity.” His monastic rules refer to “those who served the sick in the xenodocheion,” and recommend that monks who succumbed to “physical infirmity” be “sent to the xenodocheion.”¹⁴ As is well known, fourth-century Christians adopted the common Greek word *xenodocheion* (“inn, lodging”) to describe Christian facilities where sick people could stay and receive care overnight, and scholars have thus tended to regard these facilities as an early type of hospital or hospice.¹⁵ If Basil actually wrote his rules for monks who resided in the Basiliads (and not, as seems more probable, for those residing in his former monastic community much farther north in Pontus), then presumably their xenodocheion would be the same refuge “for the infirm” that he mentions in his letter to Governor Helias.¹⁶ Nonetheless his words are vague enough to support either a maximalist vision of the institution as a general hospital meant to treat all kinds of sick and infirm people or a minimalist vision of it as a monastic complex equipped to rehabilitate a particular type of sick and infirm person. Fortunately Basil also mentions

9 H. Leclercq, “Hôpitaux, hospices, hôtelleries,” *DACL* 6.2 (Paris, 1925): 2750; Finn, *Almsgiving* (n. 2 above), 230–31.

10 For the (uncertain) date and identity of Helias, see Van Dam, “Governors” (n. 2 above), 53–54.

11 Basil of Caesarea, *ep.* 94; Y. Courtonne, ed., *Saint Basile: Lettres*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1957), 205–6: οἶκον εὐκτήριον μεγαλοπρεπῶς κατεσκευασμένον ἀναστήσαι τῷ Θεῷ ἡμῶν καὶ περὶ αὐτὸν οἰκῆσιν, τὴν μὲν ἐλευθέριον ἐξηρημένην τῷ κορυφαίῳ, τὰς δὲ ὑποβεβηκυίας τοῖς θεραπευταῖς τοῦ θεοῦ διανενημεμένας ἐν τάξει.

12 Ibid., 206: Τίνα δὲ ἀδικοῦμεν καταγῶγια τοῖς ξένοις οἰκοδομοῦντες, οἷς ἂν κατὰ πάροδον ἐπιφοιτῶσι καὶ τοῖς θεραπειᾶς τινὸς διὰ τὴν ἀσθένειαν δεομένοις, καὶ τὴν ἀναγκαίαν τούτοις παραμυθίαν ἐγκαθιστάντες, τοὺς νοσοκομοῦντας, τοὺς ἰατρούοντας, τὰ νωτοφόρα, τοὺς παραπέμποντας; Τούτοις ἀνάγκη καὶ τέχνας ἔπεσθαι, τὰς τε πρὸς τὸ ζῆν ἀναγκαίας καὶ ὅσαι πρὸς εὐσχήμονα βίου διαγωγὴν ἐφευρέθησαν, οἴκους πάλιν ἐτέρους ταῖς ἐργασίαις ἐπιτηδείους.

13 G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961), s.v. θεραπευτής 1, b. Basil’s writings, especially his monastic rules, often avoid the term “monk”: see Rousseau, *Basil* (n. 4 above), 190–201. Historians occasionally discuss the Basiliads as if it represented an early form of episcopal palace. Yet there is no evidence that Basil meant to reside in the facility himself, and it is unlikely that as Caesarea’s bishop he would have chosen to reside some distance from the city. Moreover, if his monastic rules were in fact written for its residents, it is hard to account for their question-and-answer form if he were already residing there with them.

14 Basil of Caesarea, *r. brev.* 155 (PG 31:1184B): οἱ ὑπηρετοῦντες τοῖς ἐν τῷ ξενοδοχείῳ ἀρρώστοις; 286 (1284B): ἀσθενεῖα σωματικῇ περιπεσόντα, εἰς ξενοδοχεῖον ἀπάγειν. Basil of Caesarea, *Poen.* 54–58 and its reference to a *nosokomeion* (PG 31:1313B–C) is undoubtedly later and not authentic to Basil.

15 For the rise and fall of this usage in relation to other terms see E. Kislinger, “Kaiser Julien und die (christlichen) Xenodocheia,” in *Byzantios: Festschrift für Herbert Hunger zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. W. Hörandner and J. Koder (Vienna, 1984), 171–84.

16 Many surmise that these rules refer to the Basiliads, but it is more likely that they were written for monks at Basil’s Pontic estate, as assumed by A. B. Silvas, *The Asketikon of St Basil the Great* (Oxford and New York, 2005), 20–37; see also n. 13 above. This estate should probably not be identified as “Annesi,” despite the modern tradition of doing so: see G. Huxley, “Saint Basil the Great and Anisa,” *AB* 107 (1989): 30–32. I thank Joel Kalvesmaki for this reference.

the Basiliads in two letters written to Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium (*ep.* 150 and 176). In addition to identifying its “house of prayer” as a “large memorial chapel” (i.e., a martyr’s shrine probably dedicated to the Cappadocian saints Euphrosyne and Damas), in both letters he also calls the facility a *ptochotropheion*.¹⁷ Since Basil twice chose to use this specific term (literally a “place to nourish, feed, or foster ptochoi”) to conceptualize his institution as a whole, it is this term—and not *xenodocheion*—that should guide our understanding of its original scope and purpose. But what exactly was the purpose of a fourth-century *ptochotropheion*?

A contemporary author offers crucial clues. Writing in Palestine ca. 377, a few years after Basil had built his facility, Epiphanius of Salamis devoted a chapter of his guidebook on heresies, the *Panarion*, to a “thorough Arian” named Aetius who had recently caused trouble in northeastern Asia Minor. According to Epiphanius (who sometimes quotes from, and therefore seems to have been drawing on, Aetius’s own writings),¹⁸ when Aetius lost the episcopal election ca. 357 at Sebaste (the Roman metropolis of Pontus/Lesser Armenia) the victor, his former mentor Eustathius, sought to console him by making him a priest and entrusting the city’s *xenodocheion* to his supervision. Epiphanius interrupts his narrative to comment on the curious term he must have found in Aetius’s writings and then replaced in his own text with the more familiar *xenodocheion*. “A *xenodocheion*,” he observes, “in Pontus is called a *ptochotropheion*, for church leaders build such establishments out of love of hospitality and, after making maimed invalids reside there, support and supply them as best they can.”¹⁹

Epiphanius’s gloss on *ptochotropheion* has usually been taken to imply that the Pontic word was just a regional Greek word for a *xenodocheion*, so that anything called a *ptochotropheion* could be identified as

a hospital. But we should not be confident that this is accurate, or that *xenodocheion* corresponded to the Pontic term: it is equally likely, given the novelty of philanthropic institutions and the very limited vocabulary used to describe them in the middle of the fourth century, that Epiphanius simply knew no other way to explain what a *ptochotropheion* was to his Palestinian readers. More instructive is his further explanation that these institutions were specifically built to house and support “maimed invalids” (*tous lelobemenous kai adynatous*). This indicates that *ptochotropheia* in Pontus were not simply hospitals in a general sense. They were hospitals for lepers.

The key word is *lelobemenous*. The literal translation used above—“maimed” (or perhaps “mutilated” or “crippled”)—though frequently applied here and elsewhere by modern translators, does not fully connote what Epiphanius meant. During the fourth century the substantive participle *lelobemenoi* and other words related to *lobe* (damage, maiming, mutilation), *lobao* (to outrage, maim, mutilate), or *lobaomai* (to be maimed, crippled, mutilated) became euphemisms for lepers and leprosy, and indeed from then on served as the most common, nontechnical way for Greek Christian authors to refer to the most disfiguring form of leprosy and to those who suffered it.²⁰ Because this euphemism is not firmly attested in earlier Greco-Roman texts, I propose that it was adopted from the writings of Josephus, who uses *lelobemenoi* alongside *leprontes* as a synonym for Jewish lepers in Egypt in his tract *Against Apion*.²¹ Indeed, Josephus’s parallel use of

17 Basil of Caesarea, *ep.* 150; Courtonne, *Saint Basile* (n. 1 above), 74: τῷ πλησίον προσέφυγον πτωχοτροφείῳ; 176 (113): τοῦ πτωχοτροφείου τὴν μνήμην μεγάλην.

18 For its date and sources, see A. Pourtier, *L’hérésie chez Épiphanie de Salamine*, *Christianisme antique* 4 (Paris, 1992), 341–61.

19 Epiphanius, *Pan.* 75.1.7 (GCS 334): ξενοδοχεῖον . . . ὅπερ ἐν τῷ Πόντῳ καλεῖται πτωχοτροφεῖον. τοιαῦτα γὰρ τίνα κατασκευάζουσι κατὰ φιλοξενίαν καὶ τοὺς λελωβημένους καὶ ἀδυνάτους ἐκεῖσε ποιοῦντες καταλύειν ἐπιχορηγοῦσι κατὰ δύναμιν οἱ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν προστάται. I interpret the καὶ in λελωβημένους καὶ ἀδυνάτους as heptexegetical.

20 E. Benveniste, “Un nom de la lèpre,” *RPh* 38 (1964): 7–11; A. Holweg, “Zur Geschichte der Lepra in Byzanz,” in *Aussatz, Lepra, Hansen-Krankheit: Ein Menschheitsproblem im Wandel*, vol. 2, *Aufsätze*, ed. Ch. Habrich and J.-H. Wolf, *Kataloge des deutschen medizinhistorischen Museum* 1 (Ingolstadt, 1986), 69–70; J. Gasco, “L’Éléphantisme en Égypte gréco-romaine (faits, représentations, institutions),” in *Mélanges Jean-Pierre Sodini*, ed. F. Baratte, V. Déroche, C. Jolivet-Lévy, and B. Pitarakis, *TM* 15 (Paris, 2005), 262–64, 278.

21 LSJ, s.v. λωβή, II, cites Galen, *De propriorum animi cuiuslibet affectuum dignotione et curatione* 4.14 (ed. Kuhn, vol. 14, 757), to exemplify its use for leprosy, but the sense there seems figurative. Therefore the earliest certain attestation is Josephus, *Ap.* 1.28–34 (257–305, quoting an earlier author); B. Niese, ed., *Flavii Iosephi opera*, vol. 5 (Berlin, 1889), 44–51. On Josephus’s popularity among 3rd- and 4th-century Christian authorities, see H. Streckenbourg, “The Works of Josephus and the Early Christian Church,” in *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, ed. L. H. Feldman and G. Hata (Leiden, 1987), 315–24. Earlier writers commonly use

these two words may have provided a useful means of differentiating lepers suffering from crippling, ulcerous elephantiasis from lepers suffering from skin discoloration. (Ancient authors associated a wider range of skin conditions, tumors, gangrenous necroses, and growths with leprosy than we associate with Hansen's disease today.) Whatever its origins, Greek Christian authorities and Byzantine medical writers tended to reserve *lobe* and *lelobemenoi* for cases in which a body was disfigured by the loss of the nose, feet, or hands.²² To be sure, unlike the phrase "sacred disease," which Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, and others also adopted as a euphemism for elephantiasis, it is not always possible without additional details to be certain whether "mutilation" is meant to be understood euphemistically or not. Yet clearly the words *lobe*, *lelobemenoi*, and so forth, were sufficiently recognized as euphemisms for leprosy that writers could routinely use them without further clarification. This is graphically illustrated by an anecdote in which a handsome young monk decides to deter unwanted advances in the desert by sitting up to his nose in saltwater until it made his skin look unrecognizable—"like a *lelobemenos*."²³ Even casual readers were presumed to be aware that such a description denoted people suffering from leprosy, as demonstrated by a sixth-century inscription of a lepers' pool at Scythopolis in early Byzantine Palestine (Beit She'an, Israel). Found outside the city walls in the direction of springs to the southeast, it refers to the pool's beneficiaries as "those who were sick with the very grievous disease of *lobe*."²⁴

Epiphanius's gloss on the Pontic ptochotropheia is therefore more suggestive about the specific nature

of the Basiliads than has usually been recognized: rather than hospitals, we are dealing with early leprosaria, where lepers were supported and "made to reside." Located just 180 kilometers away—or five days' travel—Sebaste (modern Sivas) was the first major stop along the northeastern highway connecting Caesarea to Pontus and Armenia. Basil had spent the 350s in Pontus training as an ascetic at his family estate near the Iris River. Like Alerius, he knew Eustathius of Sebaste and considered him an exemplar and source of inspiration. Despite Peter Brown's skepticism about the importance scholars have traditionally placed on him for merging Christian asceticism with philanthropic action in fourth-century Asia Minor,²⁵ Eustathius's influence on Basil's project remains probable (see more below).

Yet it must be emphasized that we need not know about Eustathius's activities or Epiphanius's gloss to ascertain that the Basiliads was a leprosarium and not a general hospital, because that is what all the other extant sources either explicitly state or strongly imply. Theodoret of Cyrrhus (393–468), for example, whose mid-fifth-century *Church History* provides the most frequently cited discussion of the Basiliads after the fourth century (it includes the detail that Emperor Valens gave it "very fine" parcels of imperial land), introduces the Basiliads as a place for paupers "needing utmost attendance because they are maimed [*lelobemenoi*] all over their bodies." Here Theodoret employs the euphemism for leprosy in connection with the Basiliads just as he does when describing patients whom Emperor Theodosius's first wife, Flaccilla (d. 386), allegedly used to visit in fourth-century Constantinople. Theodoret also specifically differentiates the "refuges" (*katagogai*) of those patients from church *xenons*, where more

λάβει/λωβάομαι to refer to maimed or crippled people (like Homer's Thersites) without identifying their condition with leprosy.

22 On the ancient range of symptoms, see M. D. Grmek, *Diseases in the Ancient World*, trans. M. and L. Muellner (Baltimore, 1989), 152–209; for the tendency to use the euphemism to describe elephantiasis and lepromatous leprosy, P. P. Gläser, "Der Lepra-Begriff in der patristischen Literatur," in Habrich and Wolf, *Aussatz, Lepra, Hansen-Krankheit*, 64–65, and C. Dauphin, "Leprosy, Lust, and Lice: Health and Hygiene in Byzantine Palestine," *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israeli Archaeological Society* 15 (1996–97): 55–80; see also n. 53 below.

23 *Apophth. Patr.*, ser. alph. Karion 2 (PG 65:252C): ἡφάνισε τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σῶμα· γέγονε γὰρ ὡς λελωβημένος—emphasizing a change in appearance due to skin damage rather than loss of limb.

24 τοῖς τὴν ἄκραν νοσοῦσι τῆς λωβῆς νόσον; M. Avi-Yona, "The Bath of the Lepers at Scythopolis," *IEJ* 13 (1963): 325–26.

25 Brown, *Poverty and Leadership* (n. 4 above), 36–38, argues that Basil was inspired by secular governmental initiatives in Armenia, Antioch, and Constantinople, but evidence for Eustathius's influence seems firmer; see esp. Rousseau, *Basil* (n. 4 above), 68–76; A. Sherck, *Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church: The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), 27–42; Horden, "Poverty, Charity" (n. 4 above), 720–25 (implicitly criticizing, at 722 and 725, Brown's use of the later Armenian evidence); and Miller and Nesbitt, *Walking Corpses* (n. 6 above), 74. Even if (as some propose) Epiphanius applied the term *ptochotropheion* to the Sebastian facility because of the fame of the Basiliads (unlikely, given the date of the *Panarion*), his allusion to lepers to explain the term would accordingly reflect his knowledge of the function of Basil's facility.

ordinary patients lay.²⁶ Sozomen, the other major historian of the period to mention the Basiliads, similarly uses the word *katagogion* to describe Basil's facility, calling it a "refuge for ptochoi" (*ptochon . . . katagogion*).²⁷ While this phrase does not specifically refer to lepers, it is exactly the same one that John Chrysostom (ca. 340–404) used in a treatise to describe a leprosarium outside of Antioch and to differentiate it from the church xenon and its patients inside the city. Those lying in the xenon suffered from many strange diseases, he says, but those living in the ptochon katagogion suffered from afflictions that "expelled them from the city, forbidding them to share its baths or marketplaces." Chrysostom specifies that these ailments were elephantiasis and cancer, both considered to be manifestations of leprosy in his day.²⁸ His description shows that the phrase Sozomen chose to describe the Basiliads had already long been in use to distinguish extramural leprosaria (a word that did not yet exist) from urban "hospitals" for ordinary sick people in late fourth-century Asia Minor.

Still, the clearest indication that Basil's Basiliads was built to treat and sequester lepers comes from Cappadocian authorities. In the section of his commemoration where he refers to Basil's facility, Gregory of Nazianzus praises his episcopal colleague and old friend not only for taking care of lepers himself ("this scion of good stock did not disdain to honor the sick with his lips. . . . He welcomed them as brothers . . . cleansing leprosy not with words but

with deeds"),²⁹ but for liberating his fellow citizens from the awful sight of them ("no longer is that terrible, piteous spectacle before your eyes of humans who have become corpses before death, dead in most of the bodily limbs").³⁰ This remark should suffice to establish the true nature of Basil's extramural project. However, what has not been noted and must also be emphasized is that lepers are the only beneficiaries Gregory mentions in connection to Basil's project at all. Nothing in his funeral oration suggests that Basil built his Basiliads to treat anyone except lepers.

Corroboration that lepers were the primary focus of the Basiliads comes from a much-neglected source: the *Life of Gregory of Nazianzus* written by Gregory the Priest. Though this work reveals little biographical information about its author, the manuscripts at least identify him as a priest of Caesarea. Writing ca. 543–638, he offers another account of Basil's project:

When Basil the Great saw that his *loboumenous* brothers were very much in need of mercy and worthy of compassion but received the least possible pity due to the stupid inhumanity of the majority of people, who treated them as a kind of polluted, repellant abomination, [Basil], as he came to know their nature, formed a pious plan worthy of his brotherly love. After erecting immense houses and assigning to them annual incomes, which he procured from well-to-do persons whom his wise words had persuaded to make donations, he gathered all the infirm into this same place and called its buildings "school-houses of ptochoi."³¹

26 Theodoret of Cyrillus, *Church History* 4.16.13; L. Parmentier and G.-C. Hansen, eds., *Théodoret de Cyr: Histoire ecclésiastique*, vol. 2, SC 530 (Paris, 2009), 245: "πένησιν, οἱ τὸ σῶμα ἅπαν λεωβημένοι πλείονος ὅτι μάλιστα θεραπείας προσδέονται." On Flaccilla, 5.18.2 (314): τῶν τὸ σῶμα πεπηρωμένων καὶ ἅπαντα τὰ μέλη λεωβημένων παντοδαπὴν ἐποιεῖτο φροντίδα . . . αὐτουργὸς γιγνομένη καὶ εἰς τὰς τούτων καταγωγὰς ἀφικνουμένη . . . οὕτω καὶ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοὺς ξενώνας περινοστοῦσα τοὺς κλινοπετεῖς δι' ἐαυτῆς ἐνοσῆλευεν.

27 Sozomen, *Church History* 6.34.9; see Greek text above, n. 2.

28 John Chrysostom, *Stag.* 3.13 (PG 47:490): ἀπιθὶ πρὸς τὸν ἐπιτραπέντα τὴν τοῦ ξενώματος ἐπιστάσιν καὶ κέλυσον εἰσαγαγεῖν σε πρὸς τοὺς κατακειμένους ἐκεῖ, ἵνα πᾶσαν ῥίζαν ἰδῆς παθῶν, καὶ ξένους νοσημάτων τρόπους . . . ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς τὸ τῶν πτωχῶν καταγῶγιον τὸ πρὸ τῆς πόλεως ἐξίθι . . . Τί γὰρ ἂν τις εἴποι τοὺς ἐλεφαντίᾳ κατὰ μικρὸν ἀναλισκομένους ἄνδρας, τὰς καρκινῶ κατεσθιομένας γυναῖκας; Ταῦτα γὰρ ἀμφοτέρω τὰ νοσήματα μακρὰ τέστι καὶ ἀνίατα. θάτερον δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ τῆς πόλεως ἀπελαύνει τοὺς ἔχοντας, καὶ οὔτε λουτροῦ, οὔτε ἀγορᾶς, οὔτε ἄλλου τινὸς τῶν ἐνδον αὐτοῖς μετασχεῖν θέμις ἐστίν. On the close connection drawn by Galen between cancer and leprosy see Miller and Nesbitt, *Walking Corpses*, 65, 70–71.

29 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 43.63.5–7 (Bernardi, *Grégoire de Nazianze* [n. 1 above], 264): οὐδὲ τοῖς χεῖλεσιν ἀπηξίου τιμᾶν τὴν νόσον, ὃ εὐγενὴς τε καὶ τῶν εὐγενομένων καὶ τὴν δόξαν ὑπέρλαμπρος, ἀλλ' ὡς ἀδελφὸς ἡσπάζετο . . . Βασιλείου δὲ οἱ νοσοῦντες καὶ τὰ τῶν τραυμάτων ἄκη καὶ ἡ Χριστοῦ μίμησις, οὐ λόγῳ μὲν, ἔργῳ δὲ λέπραν καθαίροντος. Cf. 43.64.1 (265): λεπρὸς μὲν ἀσπάζεσθαι.

30 Ibid., 43.63.3 (Bernardi, *Grégoire de Nazianze*, 262): Οὐκ ἔτι πρόκειται τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν θέαμα δεινὸν καὶ ἐλεεινόν, ἀνθρωποὶ νεκροὶ πρὸ θανάτου καὶ τετελευτηκότες τοῖς πλείστοις τοῦ σώματος μέλεσιν.

31 Gregory the Presbyter, *v. Gr. Naz.* 11; X. Lequeux, ed., *Gregorii Presbyteri vita sancti Gregorii Theologi*, CCSG 44/corp. Naz. 11 (Turnhout, 2001), 154–56: Ὁρῶν ὁ μέγας Βασίλειος τοὺς λωβουμένους ἀδελφούς λίαν μὲν ἐλεεινοὺς καὶ συμπαθείας ἀξίους, ἥκιστα δὲ οἰκτειρομένους, καὶ ὡς ἄγος τι καὶ μίasma καὶ ἀποτρόπαιον τοῖς πολλοῖς ὄντας δι' ἀμαθίαν καὶ μισανθρωπίαν, καὶ εἰς ἐννοίαν τῆς φύσεως

Gregory goes on to explain that Gregory of Nazianzus contributed to Basil's project by crafting a speech promoting "love of ptochoi" (φιλοπτωχία) as the greatest of God's commandments and proof of philanthropy. That sermon is still extant and will be discussed briefly below; here what must be noted is that it cannot be shown to have served as the basis for all the details in this account. Gregory the Priest provides four pieces of information found neither in Gregory's sermons nor in any other known source: first, that Basil arranged in advance for his facility to be funded by securing pledges for annual contributions from wealthy donors; second, that the buildings he built for it were separate and "immense"; third, that after completing these buildings he "collected" in them the lepers of the region; and fourth, that he had his own appellation for their buildings, "*phrontisteria . . . ptochon*," an unusual phrase discussed below. Although Gregory does not reveal whether the facility still operated in his day, this information comes from no known source and probably reflects local church records or tradition.³²

These are all the descriptions of Basil's Basiliads that exist, with the exception of Gregory of Nyssa's comment, discussed below. All implicitly or explicitly indicate that the Basiliad was a leprosarium, and none suggest it was built for any purpose other than treating

ἐλθόν, βουλὴν προτίθεται, εὐσεβὴ καὶ τῆς ἐκείνου φιλαδελφίας ἀξίαν. οἴκους παμμεγέθεις ἀναδειμάμενος καὶ προσόδους ἐτησίας τάξας, ἅς ἐκ τῶν εὐπόρων περιποιήσατο, προτρέψας συνέσεως λόγοις πρὸς τὴν ἐπίδοσιν, πάντας τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς εἰς ταὐτὸν ἤθροισε, φροντιστήρια ταῦτα καλέσας πτωχῶν.

32 On the hagiographer and this passage see Lequeux's introduction, *Gregorii Presbyteri*, 13–16 and 238, where he observes that Gregory alone attests this manner of funding the Basiliad; Van Dam, *Becoming Christian* (n. 4 above), 184–85; and S. Efthymiadis, "Two Gregories and Three Genres: Autobiography, Autohagiography and Hagiography," in *Gregory of Nazianzus: Images and Reflections*, ed. J. Bjørtnes and T. Hägg (Copenhagen, 2005), 239–56. All emphasize his extensive use of Gregory's writings, but Van Dam notes that he occasionally inserted new information. Clearly he lifted words from Gregory's *Oration* 14.28 (PG 35:893) to describe how contemporaries feared lepers and may have patched together the phrase *λωβουμένους ἀδελφούς* from Gregory's reference to *λωβή* in 14.15 (PG 35:877) and frequent description of lepers as "brothers" elsewhere in the sermon (although this phrase is already attested in the early fifth century: pseudo-Martyrius, *Funeral Oration* 75). But neither Gregory's sermon nor his funeral oration provides the vocabulary used here to describe the funding, construction, and naming of the Basiliad, and the fact that these details are packaged together in a single sentence suggests that they were all taken together from some other source.

and housing lepers. While it is hard to believe that needy people were turned away from its gate, there is no evidence that Basil intended his institution to assist the sick, poor, or elderly unless they were lepers. Certainly scholars who wish to claim otherwise must argue much harder than they have done in the past.³³ In fact, recognizing that the Basiliad was intended to serve as a leprosarium and not as a general hospital helps explain both why it was built outside the city like other, later known leprosaria (but not like any known hospital)³⁴ and why complaints arose about its construction (as suggested by Basil's *ep.* 94, to Governor Helias), as we know happened in the case of later leprosaria (but not in the case of any hospital).³⁵ Recognizing that it was a leprosarium also explains why Firmus, bishop of Caesarea

33 Readers may wonder why such a variety of beneficiaries has been attributed to the facility in the past. These claims have been inferred and extrapolated—rather than based on direct evidence—from a range of sources, mainly Gregory of Nazianzus's account of Basil's activities during the famine ca. 368–370, the three sermons Basil delivered during that famine promoting philanthropic giving to the poor, and Basil's monastic rules. For example, Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital* (n. 5 above), 107, asserts that "the poor were in the forefront of Basil's conception of Christian praxis, and thus of his hospital" (italics mine). Crislip admits that there is no evidence that it cared for the elderly, "yet it stands to reason," he claims (*ibid.*, 115, based on Basil's references to infirm people in *ep.* 94), that these were included in the facility's care. His assumption (*ibid.*, 111) that the Basiliad even served as an orphanage is based solely on references to orphans in one of Basil's monastic rules (*r. fus.* 15). This rule condones admitting orphans (among other youths) into monastic communities and advises giving them separate tables and houses until they mature enough to join the community (age of entry, not orphans, being the main topic of this rule). But this rule pertains to general monastic policy, was probably written for monks, and certainly proves nothing about the Basiliad.

34 For leprosaria outside Antioch, Constantinople, Edessa, and (perhaps) Jerusalem, see John Chrysostom, *Stag.* 3.13; pseudo-Martyrius, *Funeral Oration* 61–64; *v. Zotiki* vers. 1.7–8 (cf. vers. 2.9); *Pan. Rabb.*, ed. J. J. Overbeck, *S. Ephraemi Syri Rabulae Episcopi Edesseni Balaei Aliorumque opera selecta* (Oxford, 1865), 203; *v. Petr. Ib.* 52; and Miller and Nesbitt, *Walking Corpses* (n. 6 above), 29–30. The extramural location of the Basiliad may explain why scholars have claimed it was built on family property, but there is no evidence for this claim. Even if true, it is safer to assume that the Basiliad was built outside the urban area because it was a leprosarium.

35 Opposition to Chrysostom's attempt to build a leprosarium on the Bithynian side of the Bosphorus is described in detail by pseudo-Martyrius, *Funeral Oration* 64 and 75. Considering Basil's attempt to obtain tax exemptions for other *ptochotropheia* (see below), it is additionally possible that *ep.* 94 was meant to defend an earlier effort to secure the same for the Basiliad.

around the middle of the fifth century, had occasion to ask a local landowner to return some ptochoi who had fled to his estate, preferring freedom there, Firmus complains, to the support and security that the Basiliads provided.³⁶ Far from revealing that the facility was in decline, the bishop's letter shows that he was faithfully pursuing its original mission of housing, supporting, and confining lepers.

According to Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil's example set off a competition among "leaders of society" to emulate his philanthropy toward lepers, resulting in the disappearance of lepers not only around the city of Caesarea but in its hinterland and other regions. Basil himself refers in his letters to three additional ptochotropheia in Cappadocia, one founded by an imperial officer at the city of Amaseia, the other two operated and perhaps founded by "country bishops" (*chorepiskopoi*) in locations unknown. Based on Gregory's observation about the inspiration Basil provided to others (and lacking evidence to the contrary), I think we should assume that these institutions were leprosaria as well.³⁷ Does this mean that all ptochotropheia mentioned in later texts should also be interpreted as leper colonies? Our sources allow no such certainty. Indeed, when the monk Barsanuphius advised a correspondent in sixth-century Palestine to put a leprous slave into "*to ptochotropheion ton lelobemenon*" he may have deliberately written this phrase with its definite article (*to*) and its specification of lepers to differentiate the facility he had in mind (perhaps the one that fifth-century Empress Eudocia reportedly equipped with four hundred beds in a Jerusalem suburb) from other ptochotropheia or *ptocheia* in the region.³⁸

36 Firmus of Caesarea, *ep.* 43, M.-A. Calvet-Sebasti and P.-L. Gatier, eds., *Firmus de Césarée, Lettres*, SC 350 (Paris, 1989), 166: "Εοικεν τὸ αὐτεξούσιον τῶν οἰκετῶν εἰς ἐπιθυμίαν αὐτοὺς ἐλευθερίας κινεῖν. Τῶν γὰρ ἐν Βασιλιάδι πτωχῶν ὄντες τινές, καὶ ἀνεμμένον καὶ πάσης ἀνάγκης κεχωρισμένον διάγοντες βίον, οὐ βαστάσαντες τὴν παρ' αὐτοῖς εὐημερίαν, ἀποδράντες εἰς τὴν ὑμετέραν μετέστησαν."

37 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 43.63 (Bernardi, *Grégoire de Nazianze* [n. 1 above], 264): ἅπασιν ἀγῶνα προὔθηκε τοῖς τῶν λαῶν προεστῶσι, τὴν εἰς αὐτοὺς φιλανθρωπίαν καὶ μεγαλοψυχίαν. See also Basil of Caesarea, *ep.* 142–44 (Courtonne, *Saint Basile* [n. 11 above]).

38 Barsanuphius and John, *Questions and Answers* 765; F. Neyt and P. de Angelis-Noah, eds., *Barsanuphe et Jean de Gaza: Correspondance*, vol. 3, *Aux Laïcs et aux Évêques, Lettres* 617–848, SC 468 (Paris, 2002), 208: "ὁδὸς αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ πτωχοτροφείῳ τῶν λελωβημένων." Cf. Palladius of Helenopolis, *Lausiaca History* 6; C. Butler,

It seems safe to say that all such "poor houses" were meant to provide physically disabled invalids with places to live and work for prolonged periods of time (perhaps permanently), while the xenodochia used as "hospitals" simply provided temporary shelters where sick people could "lie down" (to quote the word used by Theodoret and Chrysostom) and sleep on beds or wooden pallets until they got better.³⁹ But what prompted Basil to focus his fourth-century institution on lepers? And in precisely what sense did he intend it to nourish and foster these ptochoi, as his description and designation of it as a "ptochotropheion" proclaimed?

The Basiliads and Fourth-Century Humanitarian Crises

Several historical events have been proposed as the inspiration for Basil's philanthropic project. These

ed., *The Lausiaca History of Palladius* (Cambridge, 1904), 23: "τοῦ πτωχείου τῶν λελωβημένων." The report by Nikephoros Kallistos, *Church History* 14.50 (PG 146.2:124AB) on Eudocia's *ptocheion* for 400 lepers (differentiated from other *ptocheia* ascribed to her) is plausible. Because lepers came from afar to wash in the Jordan and springs near Jericho, Palestine (and Jerusalem in particular) had several leprosaria: see Avi-Yona, "The Bath of the Lepers" (n. 24 above), 326, and Miller and Nesbitt, *Walking Corpses*, 84–85.

39 The problems created by the multiplicity and inconsistency of such terminology for reconstructing the history of these institutions is discussed by É. Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance 4^e–7^e siècles*, Civilisations et Sociétés 48 (Paris, 1977), 193–94. The minor distinction I propose is based on Chrysostom and Theodoret's descriptions of people lying in church xenons but not in leper asylums (see above, nn. 26 and 28). A similar conclusion is reached by Miller and Nesbitt, *Walking Corpses*, 85–89, where they discuss the term *gerokomeion* ("facility for geriatric care") that was also used as a synonym for ptochotropheion/ptocheion (I thank my DOP reviewers for pointing this out). Long-term habitation in ptocheia is suggested by an Anastasian law (*CIC CI* 1.2.17,2) requiring resident ptochoi to be present in decisions regarding their ptocheion's alienation of property. The law requires this also of monks in monasteries but not of patients in xenons, suggesting that the latter were not regarded as permanent residents (cf. Gasco, "L'Éléphantisis" [n. 20 above], 283–84, on legal rights of lepers in leprosaria). Although a later law preserved only in Latin (*CIC CI* 1.3.48,3, dated 531) refers to *aegrotantes* laboring with their bodies in urban *xenones* or *xenodocha* (sic), an earlier part of the law indicates that this refers to an urban *ptochium* (48,1). Of course, any ptochotropheion or ptocheion was at some level a xenodochion or xenon, any of which could also be a leprosarium: cf. *ACO* 2.1. [215], ed. Schwartz, 18: ἐν ἐνὶ ξενεῶνι τῶν λελωβημένων, perhaps referring to the ptocheion mentioned by Palladius (see previous note), which Palladius also calls a *δοσιτίον*.

have ranged from the example of his younger brother Naucrati⁴⁰ “nursing with his own hands old men living together in penury and sickness” in the 350s near the family estate in Pontus to Basil’s trip to Egypt ca. 356, which may have exposed him to medical practices developed in Pachomian monasteries.⁴¹ But most historians account for Basil’s construction of the Basili⁴²as by referring either to the severe famine that struck Asia Minor ca. 368–370 or to a sudden outbreak of leprosy in Cappadocia, which itself is hypothesized from the appearance of lepers as a theme in contemporary Cappadocian sermons. Basil’s project has been seen as a practical response to either one of these crises, or—assuming that the famine triggered an epidemic—to both.

Of these two modern explanations, the relevance of the Cappadocian famine is the most firmly entrenched.⁴³ Both Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil’s brother Gregory of Nyssa describe the crisis and Basil’s response to it. Calling the famine the worst ever recorded, Gregory of Nazianzus says that those who possessed supplies refused to share or sell anything until Basil persuaded them. (Basil reproaches wealthy Christians for not opening their silos in two sermons that survive from this period: “I Will Tear Down My Barns” and “In Time of Drought and Famine,” in which he notes that due to their hoarding “pagan stories of philanthropia are putting us to shame.”⁴²) Gregory reports that after collecting contributions Basil set up vats of soup and washed the feet of refugees at Caesarea with the help of his slaves, thereby “attending to both the bodies and souls of the needy” himself.⁴³ Gregory

of Nyssa adds that Basil “impartially offered a share of his philanthropy even to children of the Jews.”⁴⁴

That exhausts our information on both the famine and Basil’s response to it. One reason for connecting the crisis to Basil’s construction of the Basili⁴⁵as is the proximity of the dates assumed for both. The traditional date of the famine is 368, though 369 and 370 have also been proposed, while the terminus ante quem for completion of the Basili⁴⁶as is usually considered to be 372, when, according to Theodoret, Emperor Valens visited the city and was sufficiently impressed by Basil’s work to donate land to support his efforts. Assuming that the construction of the facility would have taken at least two years, it is reasoned that ground might have been broken ca. 370, a date that coincides both with the famine (if the date of 370 is correct) and with Basil’s elevation to the episcopate in June 370. This has led Peter Brown (who prefers 370 as the date for the Cappadocian famine based on evidence for a famine that year in nearby Phrygia) to propose that Basil initiated the project not only to deal with the famine but to prove his credentials as a Christian leader ready to use the traditional mechanism of aristocratic benefactions to help the imperial administration stabilize rural populations.⁴⁵ Even without proposing such a political motive, Philip Rousseau remarks that the date of the famine and the building of the Basili⁴⁶as are close enough “to make a connection assured.”⁴⁶

Despite this consensus, a connection between these two events becomes less assured if we reexamine the evidence. For a start, the dates of 370–372 for construction of the Basili⁴⁷as are not as firmly established as is often assumed. In his *Church History* Theodoret explains that, while visiting Cappadocia in January 372, Emperor Valens “so admired” Basil after hearing his witty reply to an imperial officer’s remark “that he [viz., the emperor] even gave the finest land he had there

40 For Naucrati⁴⁰’s project, Gregory of Nyssa, *v. Macr.* 8, in *Grégoire de Nysse: Vie de sainte Macrine*, ed. P. Maraval, SC 178 (Paris, 1971), 168: *πρεσβύτας τινὰς πενίᾳ καὶ ἀρρωστίᾳ συζῶντας ταῖς ἰδίαις χερσὶν ἐθεράπευε*. Basil mentions his Egyptian trip in *ep.* 223.2. Based on that letter, Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital* (n. 5 above), asserts that Pachomian practices influenced Basil’s project. But Basil’s letter offers few details, and none that support that historical claim: see Horden, “Poverty, Charity” (n. 4 above), 720.

41 Resulting in an otherwise unfounded modern claim that Basil equipped the Basili⁴¹as with granaries to store and distribute food to people in need. See, e.g., Gain, *L’Église de Cappadoce* (n. 6 above), 281.

42 Basil of Caesarea, *Homily* 8.8 (PG 31:325A): *Αἰδεσθῶμεν Ἑλλήνων φιλόανθρωπα διηγήματα*. For analyses of homilies 6–8 and their contexts, see Holman, *Hungry Are Dying* (n. 7 above), 76–109.

43 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 43.34–36, quoted from 35 (Bernardi, *Grégoire de Nazianze* [n. 1 above], 204).

44 Gregory of Nyssa, *laud. Bas.* 17, in *GNO* 10.1, ed. G. Heil, J. P. Cavarinos, and O. Lendle (Leiden and New York, 1990), 12.4: *ὥς καὶ τοῖς τῶν Ἰουδαίων παισὶν ἐκ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ προθεῖναι τῆς φιλοανθρωπίας ταύτης τὴν μετουσίαν*.

45 Brown, *Poverty and Leadership* (n. 4 above), 41–42. For an earlier argument in favor of collaboration with the imperial government, see Scicolone, “Basilio e la sua organizzazione” (n. 4 above). See also Finn, *Almsgiving* (n. 2 above), 228–36, and N. Lenski, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 34 (Berkeley, 2002), 274.

46 Rousseau, *Basil* (n. 4 above), 141 (cf. 139), dates the famine to 369.

as a gift for the paupers under his care, who needed utmost attendance because they were mutilated all over their bodies.”⁴⁷ This statement has usually been interpreted to mean that when Valens visited Caesarea in 372, he saw the Basiliad and gave it an endowment of land (much of the Cappadocian plateau was imperial property, used for horse ranches). Yet Theodoret does not say that the Basiliad had been completed, or that the emperor saw it, or that he gave land to provide it with an endowment; his statement only indicates that by 372 Basil had begun taking care of lepers—work that the *Life of Gregory* says was initially financially supported through Christian subscriptions. If we acknowledge that Basil may not have written his letter (*ep.* 94) describing the construction of the Basiliad to Governor Helias before the “mid or later 370s” (and therefore much later in Basil’s episcopate than is often presumed),⁴⁸ then we might also envision that Valens’s donation in 372 was meant to provide land on which a large facility, as yet nonexistent, could be built outside the walls of Caesarea. In that case the year 372 would mark the terminus post quem rather than the terminus ante quem for commencement of the construction of the facility.

My point is not to propose a new date for the construction of the Basiliad (although a date later in Basil’s career cannot be ruled out). Rather I wish to show that since the traditional early dates of ca. 370–372 for its inception and completion are by no means firm, its historical connection to the famine of ca. 368–370 is also far less certain than is usually assumed. But most conclusive is the fact that neither Gregory of Nazianzus nor Gregory of Nyssa connect Basil’s foundation to the famine or mention it in any way as part of Basil’s response to the famine. In fact, Gregory of Nazianzus describes the famine and Basil’s philanthropic response with the soup kitchen almost thirty sections before he mentions the Basiliad, which he introduces only after describing Basil’s ordination as bishop in 370, nearly half the speech later. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that

these two contemporaries did not connect the Basiliad to the famine as modern historians have done.

Finally, if at risk of circularity, it should be reiterated that there is no evidence that Basil’s facility was equipped for the purpose of serving victims of a disaster or ordinary people in need. Although Basil’s phrases, “a refuge for strangers” built for “visitors on travel,” in his letter to Helias might be construed to refer, in an elevated way, to a homeless shelter for wandering poor people, it more likely simply refers to guest rooms reserved for visiting travelers, a common feature of later monasteries.⁴⁹ In fact, his monastic rules repeatedly discourage stewards from giving monastery resources to wandering beggars by invoking Jesus’s declaration to the Canaanite woman, “it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs” (Matthew 15:26). Likewise his letter inviting Bishop Amphilochius to visit his ptochotropheion differentiates between giving “to the afflicted” and giving to random beggars, a distinction he considered tantamount to the difference between giving to God and giving to a dog.⁵⁰ These comments make it improbable that Basil conceived his Basiliad as a permanent, open-door shelter, let alone as a scheme to maintain the social fabric of the region. To conclude, the famine of ca. 368–370 cannot be presumed to have inspired Basil’s project, except insofar as it may have raised the incidence of leprosy in the region through increased rates of malnutrition (since scurvy, pellagra, and other vitamin deficiencies can produce skin lesions, protrusions, and discolorations of a type that were generally identified as leprosy in antiquity).⁵¹

Let us now turn to that question of incidence. Are there really grounds for assuming that Cappadocia suffered from a sudden rise in leprosy in the fourth century, or that this moved Basil to build a leprosarium? Certainly references to lepers, leprosy, and leprosariums can be found in numerous Christian sources starting in the fourth and fifth centuries, the earliest and most detailed of these being the sermons composed

47 Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Church History* 4.16.13 (Parmentier and Hansen, *Théodoret de Cyr* [n. 26 above], 245): ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς οὕτως ἡγάσθη τὸν ἄνδρα ὡς καὶ χωρία τὰ κάλλιστα ὧν εἶχεν αὐτόθι τοῖς ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ φροντιζομένοις δωρήσασθαι πένησιν, οἱ τὸ σῶμα ἅπαν λελωβημένοι πλείονος ὅτι μάλιστα θεραπείας προσδέονται.

48 Van Dam, “Governors” (n. 2 above), 54, noting problems dating Helias’s governorship to the early 370s.

49 See n. 12 above. That he invited Helias to use the facility’s administrative quarters does not mean that visitors ordinarily had access to it: the invitation was made to an imperial dignitary and his staff.

50 Basil of Caesarea *ep.* 150; *r. brev.* 100, 101, 302. See also below, nn. 71 and 81.

51 Plausibly suggested by S. R. Holman, “Healing the Social Leper in Gregory of Nyssa’s and Gregory of Nazianzus’s ‘περὶ φιλοπτωχίας,’” *HTR* 92 (1999): 284n9 and 300.

by Basil's episcopal colleagues Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, discussed below.⁵² This surge in literary evidence is striking, partly because Christian writers do not mention leprosy (at least in any literal sense) before the fourth century. Does this mean that Basil and the Gregories were facing a sudden outbreak or epidemic of leprosy in Cappadocia that soon spread to Antioch, Edessa, and other areas?

Scholars have often assumed this to be the case. Most recently Timothy Miller and John Nesbitt have affirmed that the evidence "suggests that the disease was spreading rapidly; indeed, that it represented a new problem."⁵³ Central to their thesis are medieval hagiographies that report that during the age of Constantine lepers flocked to Constantinople in such droves that local authorities took to rounding them up and drowning them in the Bosphorus, until a Christian aristocrat named Zoticus built an asylum to house them across the Golden Horn. Also pertinent is Gregory of Nyssa's remark that it was imperative to fulfill Jesus's command to help the sick and hungry (Matthew 25:35–40) "especially now . . . when many are in need of necessities, but many are also in need regarding their own bodies, people who have been wasted away by this terrible disease."⁵⁴

52 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 14 (De pauperibus amandis)*, PG 35:855–910; Gregory of Nyssa, *In illud: Quatenus uni ex his fecistis mihi fecistis* (also called *De pauperibus amandis* 2, hereafter *paup.* 2), in *GNO* 9.1, ed. A. van Heck (Leiden, 1967), 111–27; Gregory of Nyssa, *De beneficentia* (also called *De pauperibus amandis* 1; hereafter *paup.* 1), in Van Heck, *GNO* 9.1, 93–108, deals with poverty more generally. The other main sources are from the early fifth century (see nn. 34–38 above). Prior to the fourth century the only extant Christian discussion of leprosy comes from the Platonizing exegete Methodius of Olympia, who treats the expulsion of lepers in Lev. 13 as a symbol for expelling sin from the church: see Holman, "Social Leper," 296.

53 Miller and Nesbitt, *Walking Corpses* (n. 6 above), 29. See also Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique* (n. 39 above), 110, and J. Gascou, *Sophronie de Jérusalem: Miracles des saints Cyr et Jean (BHG I 477–79)* (Paris, 2006), 66n373, speculating that the new emergence of elephantiasis in the fourth century caused authorities to search for a term to differentiate it from skin discoloration identified with biblical leprosy, resulting in the adoption of *lelobemenos* and protection of such victims from Old Testament sanctions against those afflicted with *lepra*.

54 Gregory of Nyssa, *paup.* 2 (Van Heck, *GNO* 9.1, 113; trans. Miller and Nesbitt, *Walking Corpses*, 175): καὶ μάλιστα νῦν, ὅτε πολλὴν ἔχει κατὰ τὸν παρόντα βίον ὕλην ἢ ἐντολὴ καὶ πολλοὶ μὲν οἱ τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἐνδεεῖς, πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ σώματος ἔχουσιν ἐνδεῶς ἐκ τῆς πονηρᾶς ἀρρωστίας δαπανηθέντες.

At first glance such remarks make a fourth-century rise in the incidence of leprosy seem obvious. Yet on closer inspection this historical explanation for the construction of the Basiliads and other early Byzantine leprosaria becomes far less cogent. Setting aside the legend of Zoticus and the methodological problem of using hagiography composed in the eleventh century to reconstruct fourth-century history,⁵⁵ Gregory's words "especially now" recall remarks he used at the start of another sermon to impress on his audience the urgency for almsgiving:

We have seen in these days a great number of the naked and homeless. For the most part they are victims of war who knock at our doors. But there is also no lack of strangers and exiles, and their hands, stretched out imploring, can be seen everywhere.⁵⁶

When set beside the temporal phrase "in these days" the words "especially now" in Gregory's other sermon seem to express a similar perception of general upheaval amid troubled times (possibly caused by a Gothic incursion into the area ca. 377–380)⁵⁷ instead of a reference to a change in incidence of leprosy. Once we discount the relevance of these two temporal remarks to an increase of leprosy, then all testimony for an increase in the disease during the fourth century disappears.

55 Neither the two versions of the Zoticus legend nor their archetypes date before the eleventh century: see M. Aubineau, "Zoticos de Constantinople: Nourricier des pauvres et serviteur des lépreux," *AB* 93 (1975): 67–108, and T. S. Miller, "The Legend of Saint Zoticos according to Constantine Akropolites," *AB* 112 (1994): 339–76. Aubineau does not claim historicity for his version; Miller and Nesbitt, *Walking Corpses*, 75–79, defend the historicity of theirs, partly based on its use to reconstruct municipal handling of lepers by G. Sidéris, "Lèpre et lépreux à Constantinople: Maladie, épidémie et idéologie impériale à Byzance," in *La Paléodémographie: Mémoire d'os, mémoire d'hommes*, ed. L. Buchet, C. Dauphin, and I. Ségué (Antibes, 2006), 187–207. Although there is late antique evidence for the existence of Zoticus and his orphanages and ptocheia in the fourth century (e.g. *CIC CI* 1.3.34, issued in 472), this evidence does not corroborate the medieval narrative.

56 Gregory of Nyssa, *paup.* 1 (Van Heck, *GNO* 9.1, 96; trans. Holman, *Hungry Are Dying* [n. 7 above], 194): Πολλὴν δὲ ἡμῖν ἀφθονίαν τῶν γυμνῶν καὶ τῶν ἀστέγων ὁ νῦν ἤνεγκε χρόνος· πλῆθος γὰρ αἰχμαλώτων πρὸς ταῖς θύραις ἐκάστου. καὶ ὁ ξένος καὶ μετανάστης οὐ λείπει καὶ τὴν ζητοῦσαν χεῖρα πανταχοῦ τεταμένην ἔστιν ἰδεῖν.

57 Holman, *Hungry Are Dying*, 147.

But there are other reasons to suspect that leprosy was neither rapidly spreading nor presenting a new problem at the time. First of all, Hansen's disease (as seems to have been the form of leprosy that concerned the two Gregories), though contagious, is far less contagious than often believed. Unlike the air-borne bacteria that produce smallpox and plague, contracting *Mycobacterium leprae* requires prolonged direct contact and exposure to a host's bodily fluids. Then it takes an unusually long time to incubate and multiply, ranging from several months to twenty years. This makes its dissemination hard to classify in terms of an epidemic. True, when introduced to favorable new environments—especially if the communities are small and contained—the result can assume the appearance of an epidemic, as when it reached hitherto uncontaminated Polynesian islands in the nineteenth century and as perhaps happened after crusaders returned to western Europe after years in the Near East. Yet there is little evidence from modern, medieval, or ancient times (e.g., no mass graves have been found) of it rising or subsiding in cyclical fashion like an epidemic. Instead, after its introduction to a region it tends to sit and remain endemic at steady levels as long as poor sanitary conditions persist.⁵⁸

Additionally we have good evidence that Asia Minor (as well as Egypt) was a region in the Roman Empire where leprosy had become endemic well before the fourth century. Besides the implication of modern paleogenetics and references by the second-century medical writer Galen to lepers in Pergamum,⁵⁹ we have

the testimony of another medical authority known as Aretaeus of Cappadocia. Aretaeus adopted the archaic dialect of Hippocrates to compose the most elaborate account of leprosy to survive from antiquity. Despite its antiquarian pretensions it remains quite illuminating. Besides describing in grotesque detail the various manifestations of the disease and espousing a pneumatist explanation for its cause (attributing it to the innate cooling of a person's vital heat; Galen, on the other hand, believed it was caused by an excess of black bile), Aretaeus sketches a moving account of how victims in his day were treated. Loss of body parts did not bring an end to their "shameful life and terrible agonies," he observes:

Who would not flee people in such condition or not be repelled even if he be a son or father, or maybe even a brother? There is also fear of infection by the evil. Many therefore take those who are most dear to them out to the desert or into the mountains. While some of these assist them in their hunger for a time, others help as little as possible because they want them to perish.⁶⁰

We do not know when Aretaeus lived: most specialists date him before Galen to the first century of the common era, but others have placed him anywhere from the second to the early fourth century.⁶¹ Whenever

58 F. J. Louis et al., "The Last Offensive of Leprosy in the South Pacific Ocean: The Epidemic on Rapa (1922–1950)," *Bulletin de la Société de pathologie exotique et de ses filiales* 80 (1987): 306–19; V. J. Schuenemann et al., "Genome-Wide Comparison of Medieval and Modern *Mycobacterium leprae*," *Science* 341 (2013): 179–83; and T. A. Mendum et al., "Mycobacterium leprae Genomes from a British Medieval Leprosy Hospital: Towards Understanding an Ancient Epidemic," *BMC Genomics* 15 (2014): 270. I thank Alex More, postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University's Initiative for the Science of the Human Past, for bibliography and comment. For a historical account informed by science, see K. Manchester, "Leprosy: The Origin and Development of the Disease in Antiquity," in *Maladie et Maladies: Histoire et conceptualisation; Mélanges en l'honneur de Mirko Grmek*, ed. D. Gourevitch, École pratique des hautes études, IVE section, Sciences historique et philologiques 5; Hautes Études médiévales et modernes 70 (Geneva, 1992), 31–49.

59 On Galen's references to Pergamum and Egypt, see Miller and Nesbitt, *Walking Corpses*, 25 and 33; for endemism in Turkey,

see M. Monot et al., "Comparative Genomic and Phylogeographic Analysis of *Mycobacterium leprae*," *Nature Genetics* 41 (2009): 1287.

60 Aretaeus Medicus, *De causis* 4.13.17 and 19, in *Corpus medicorum graecorum*, ed. K. Hude, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1958), 89–90: οὐδὲ γὰρ θανατοῖ τὸ κακὸν ἐς ἀπαλλαγὴν βίου αἰσχροῦ καὶ ἀλγέων δεινῶν. . . . δέος καὶ ἀμφὶ μεταδόσιος τοῦ κακοῦ. πολλοὶ γοῦν ἐπ' ἐρημίαι καὶ ἐς ὄρεα τοὺς φιλότατους ἐξέθεσαν, οἱ μὲν ἐς χρόνον ἐπαρήγοντες τῷ λιμῷ, οἱ δὲ ὡς ἤκιστα σφέας ἐθέλοντες ἐκθανεῖν.

61 For extensive discussion, see S. M. Oberhelman, "On the Chronology and Pneumatism of Aretaios of Cappadocia," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.37.1, ed. W. Haase and H. Temporini (Berlin and New York, 1993), 941–66, reasoning that Galen's influence would have rendered Aretaeus's pneumatism and work unlikely after the first century; yet Aretaeus's antiquarianism might place him in the milieu of the Second Sophistic. Holman, *Hungry Are Dying*, 154, suggests that he had heard of Christian desert ascetics, based on an apparent reference in an eighteenth-century translation of his text to people who, "hating society, fly into the desert and become superstitiously religious." But that is a mistranslation of a passage where Aretaeus explains how *melancholia* affects people in different ways: Aretaeus Medicus, *De causis* 3.5.3 (Hude, 40): μελαγχολῶσι δὲ οὐκ ἐπὶ ἐνὶ εἰδεῖ ἕκαστοι, ἀλλ' ἢ πρὸς φαρμακείην ὑποπτοί, ἢ ἐς ἐρημίην φεύγουσι μισανθρωπίῃ, ἢ ἐς δεισιδαιμονίην τρέπονται, ἢ

he wrote, it was before Basil and other Cappadocian church leaders; however, his toponymic indicates that Aretaeus, like them, was a Cappadocian, and his subsequent obscurity suggests that “he never left his homeland of Cappadocia.”⁶²

It is therefore unnecessary to posit a new epidemic to explain the presence of lepers in fourth-century Cappadocia. The disease and its sad consequences had already become visible there (and presumably elsewhere in Asia Minor, as evinced by Galen) long before church leaders began calling for a philanthropic solution. Instead the fourth-century emergence of lepers in Christian discourse can be cogently explained in another way. One of the great merits of Peter Brown’s *Poverty and Leadership in the Late Roman Empire* is that it makes clear that we need not—and should not—posit an actual increase in poverty in the fourth century to account for the unprecedented focus of late fourth- and early fifth-century preaching on the anonymous poor. Previously, as with lepers, the poor are relatively difficult to find in existing sources (Christian or otherwise); then, suddenly, they are everywhere. Modern historians have usually explained this new visibility by assuming that late Roman conditions caused a marked rise in poverty (and in leprosy). As Brown points out, however, this assumption cannot be substantiated. Instead the increased references to the poor are more convincingly connected to the struggle of church leaders to find their voice in late Roman politics. Rather than attesting new, unprecedented levels of poverty, such preaching brought to light a neglected issue, using a biblical ideology of social justice to legitimize a new mode of Christian leadership.⁶³

The emergence of episcopal advocacy for lepers was simultaneous with, and should be viewed as part of, that ideologically and politically driven focus on the poor. Yet, as Susan Holman has shown, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa both also viewed

leprosy from a theological perspective, redefining it as a “sacred disease” and treating lepers in their sermons as opportunities to communicate ideas about Christ’s incarnation and the general goodness of God’s mutable, material creation. Importantly, neither believed that leprosy was contagious—another reason not to take their testimony as evidence of an epidemic. In fact, “the two Gregories, but especially Gregory of Nyssa, use the popular fear of contagion to suggest that the physically ill, exiled lepers possess a divine sanctity that may benefit the physically well only by direct contact.”⁶⁴ Gregory of Nyssa went so far as to present those who suffered from the disease as positive examples of how something as pure as God’s divinity could sanctify something as earthly, infirm, and often horrific as human flesh. Although Basil himself never directly discusses leprosy in his extant writings, we are justified in asking what ideological or theological concerns may have motivated his own distinct concern for lepers.

“Schoolhouses for *Ptochoi*”

One place to start is with the strange appellation that Gregory the hagiographer says Basil used when referring to his buildings for lepers: “phrontisteria . . . ptochon.” This use of the word *phrontisterion* is peculiar. Based on the assumption that Basil had built a hospital and on Gregory the hagiographer’s other use of the word to describe how Gregory of Nazianzus had evaded ordination in the rustic village of Sasima by hiding himself in a “phrontisterion for the infirm, where he mitigated the severity of the disease with ministrations and paternal words,”⁶⁵ scholars have inferred that the Greek word sometimes meant “hospital.” If so, Gregory’s hagiography provides the only evidence of that usage. Classical authors had coined the word to designate a place dedicated to advanced study or philosophical concentration. Fourth-century Christians adopted it as an elevated term for “lavra” or “monastery,” and this in fact is the only meaning it has in the five places where it appears in

μίσος ἐστὶ τοῦ ζῆν τουτέοισι (“they either suspect poisoning, or flee to a desert with a hatred of humanity, or turn to superstition, or possess a hatred for living”). Late antique writers show familiarity with his work, but according to Miller and Nesbitt, *Walking Corpses*, 14, no writers do before the Constantinian era.

62 Oberhelman, “Chronology,” 959, with the added qualification: “if that in fact [Cappadocia] was his country.” This is unhelpful: all MSS. include the toponymic, and why would such a relatively remote region be assigned to Aretaeus if he did not come from there?

63 See especially Brown, *Poverty and Leadership* (n. 4 above), 7–9.

64 Holman, *Hungry Are Dying*, 145, 161–66; cf. Miller and Nesbitt, *Walking Corpses*, 52–54.

65 Gregory the Presbyter, *v. Greg.* 10 (Lequeux, *Gregorii Presbyteri* [n. 31 above], 152): εἰς φροντιστήριον ἀσθενῶν καταφεύγει, διακονίᾳ τε καὶ λόγοις πατρικοῖς τὸ δυσάλθεῖς τῆς νόσου καταπραῦνων· καὶ φιλοσοφίαν τῶν καιρῶν ἐγγυμναστήριον τίθεται.

the extant writings of Gregory of Nazianzus.⁶⁶ While it is possible that Gregory's hagiographer misused the word in his narrative (as his modern editor believes),⁶⁷ it seems more probable that he applied a term that he found in local records of the Basiliads to describe other ptochotropheia in Cappadocia. In that case his peculiar usage might go back to records of a name that Basil himself had occasionally used to describe his institution.

Substantiating my reasoning is Gregory of Nyssa's explanation of the Basiliads and the motivation behind it. Gregory was Basil's younger brother. In his commemorative sermon "In Praise of Basil," Gregory remarks that Basil, like a new Moses, had constructed a "tabernacle in the suburb," where,

through good instruction, he made the ptochoi in body become ptochoi in spirit, so that their poverty might become blessed for them, securing for them the grace of the true kingdom. By speaking he crafted in the soul of each a true tabernacle that God could inhabit, building in each pillars—pillars of reason, I mean, to support the labor of virtue—and likewise wash-basins to wash out the pollutions of the soul, rinsing with water the defilement from their eyes.⁶⁸

To my knowledge this passage has never been cited in connection with the Basiliads. Highly rhetorical though it is, there can be no question that Gregory is referring to Basil's institution outside Caesarea, describing its therapies and explaining its ultimate purpose: to encourage and train its resident lepers, despite being ptochoi in body, to become those ptochoi whom Jesus had pronounced blessed in the

Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit"). This testimony forces us to look on the Basiliads not just as a leprosarium, but as an assemblage of "phrontisteria . . . ptochon" inspired by a particular notion of poverty and dedicated to the sanctification of its inmates.

We may start by noting that such a description resembles Basil's own notion of a monastic community. As is well known, Basil's reputation in later Byzantine tradition was based as much on his efforts to promote and regulate communal asceticism as on his doctrinal and pastoral achievements. For him, Christian monasticism was essentially a contemplative discipline or "philosophy" that used prayer and communal affection to foster humility in the soul and access to God.⁶⁹ Nowhere does he call the organized result "monasticism." Instead, he uses such phrases as "the evangelical life," "the life of endurance," or—significantly for our purposes—"the poverty (ptochia) called blessed by Christ" and "the ptocheia for Christ's sake."⁷⁰ In his view, monks stood foremost among those whom Jesus had meant by the phrase "ptochos in spirit." In his exegesis of the verse "This ptochos cried out, and the Lord heard him and saved him from every trouble" in Psalm 34 (33):6, he explains:

Not all ptocheia is to be praised, only that which is deliberately assumed for an evangelical purpose. Many are ptochoi in material circumstances but have a very greedy disposition; these are not saved by their condition of want but condemned by their disposition. Indeed the condition of want is not always blessed, but only if it is premised on belief that Christ's commandment is better than the treasures of the universe. These are in fact the people whom the Lord called blessed when he said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit"—not people who are paupers [*penetes*] according to material circumstances, but people who have elected ptocheia for spiritual reasons. For nothing involuntary is called blessed.

66 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations* 4.111, 21.19, 43.29, *De vita sua* 1706, *ep.* 4.3, with Lampe, *Lexicon* (n. 13 above), s.v. φροντιστήριον.

67 See Lequeux's commentary to *v. Greg.* 10, p. 234.

68 Gregory of Nyssa, *In laud. Bas.* 21 (Heil, Cavarinos, and Lendle, *GNO* 10.1 [n. 44 above], 127–28): οἷαν μαρτυρίου σκηνὴν καὶ σωματικῶς μὲν ἐν τῷ προαστείῳ κατεσκευάσατο, τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῷ σώματι πτωχοὺς τῷ πνεύματι διὰ τῆς ἀγαθῆς διδασκαλίας εἶναι ποιήσας, ὥστε αὐτοῖς γενέσθαι μακαριστὴν τὴν πτωχείαν τῆς ἀληθινῆς βασιλείας προξενούσαν τὴν χάριν; σκηνὴν δὲ ἀληθὴ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ κατοίκησιν τὴν ἐκάστου ψυχὴν ἐδημιούργει τῷ λόγῳ, καὶ στύλους τινας ἐν αὐτῇ κατασκευάζων. λογισμοὺς λέγω τοὺς στύλους τοὺς τὸ ἐπίπονον τῆς ἀρετῆς ὑπερείδοντας· καὶ λουτήρας ὡσαύτως πρὸς τὸ ἐκπλύνειν τῆς ψυχῆς τὰ μιάσματα, τῷ ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ὕδατι τὸν μολυσμὸν ἀποκλύζοντας. ὅσας λυχνίας ἐνετίθει τῇ ἐκάστου ψυχῇ, καταφωτίζων τῷ λόγῳ τὰ κρύφια.

69 See esp. Rousseau, *Basil* (n. 4 above), 76–90, 195–201.

70 Basil of Caesarea, *r. fus.* 20 (PG 31:969–72): τὴν ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ μακαριζομένην πτωχείαν. . . διὰ Χριστὸν πτωχεύας. For "evangelical life" (τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον πολιτεία) and "life of endurance" (τὸν καρτερικόν), see *ep.* 173 and 223.2 (Courtonne, *Saint Basile* [n. 11 above], 2:108, 3:10).

Every virtue, but this above all, is characterized by choice. And so [the Psalmist] says, “this one, the *ptochos* cried out.” And with his declarative voice he directs your mind towards him who has become a *ptochos*—being hungry and thirsty and naked—for God’s sake; “This *ptochos*” [he says], pointing with a single finger to “this one, the disciple of Christ.” The word can also refer to Christ, Who, though rich by nature (since all of His things were His Father’s), became a *ptochos* for us, so that we might be enriched by his *ptochēia*. For the Lord Himself founded nearly every practice conducive to blessedness, putting Himself forth as a model for His disciples.⁷¹

For Basil, the designation “the poor in spirit” provided another way of thinking about professional Christians, i.e. clerics and monks.⁷² However, at one point in his monastic rules he mentions another group worthy of that name. After explaining that the phrase only applies to those who had become *ptochoi* by fulfilling Christ’s instruction to “sell all that you have and give to the poor” (Matthew 19:21), Basil goes on to extend it to anyone who humbly accepts whatever *ptochēia* had befallen him and lives thereafter according to God’s

will, “like Lazarus.” Such a person, Basil affirms, is no less blessed than another.⁷³

In the writings of the Cappadocians, as in later Christian literature, Lazarus lying at the rich man’s gate with sores covering his body (Luke 16:19–31) not only represented the greatest biblical exemplar next to Job of a virtuous *ptochos* (since he passively accepts and does not complain about his dire sufferings and neglect), but he also, like Job, was believed to be a victim of leprosy.⁷⁴ Although Basil probably meant this reference to Lazarus in his monastic rule to stand figuratively for any afflicted person, there is good reason to suppose that nursing lepers and helping them become “poor in spirit” was part of Basil’s monastic program. Symbiotic relationships between lepers and penitential monks became a standard motif in hagiography from the fifth century onward. Palladius, for example, tells of a monk named Eulogius who vowed to wash and feed a leper with his own hands for the rest of his life so that by this work he might be saved, asking only that God might give him the stamina and forbearance necessary to carry it out. When the leper eventually complained that he wanted to be left alone, Eulogius took him to the anchorite Antony the Great, who first reproached Eulogius for his impulse to agree to the leper’s wish, then berated the leper for not appreciating a monk who had deigned to become his slave for Christ’s sake. The two lived together for another forty days, when both died.⁷⁵ Daniel of Scetis reportedly served a leper to atone for a murder; after finding one on the streets of Alexandria who had no arms or teeth, he carried him to his desert cell and put food in his mouth daily by hand, causing his disciple to praise God for giving Daniel such patience.⁷⁶ Pachomian tradition relates that a leper named

71 Basil of Caesarea, *In Ps. 33* (PG 29:361): Οὐκ αἰεὶ ἐπαινετὴ ἡ πτωχεία, ἀλλ’ ἡ ἐκ προαιρέσεως κατὰ τὸν εὐαγγελικὸν σκοπὸν κατορθουμένη. Πολλοὶ γὰρ πτωχοὶ μὲν τῇ περισσίᾳ, πλεονεκτικῶτατοι δὲ τῇ προαιρέσει τυγχάνουσιν· οὓς οὐχ ἡ ἔνδεια σώζει, ἀλλ’ ἡ προαίρεσις κατακρίνει. Οὐ τοίνυν ὁ ἐνδεὴς πάντως μακαριστὸς, ἀλλ’ ὁ κρείττονα ἡγησάμενος τῶν τοῦ κόσμου θησαυρῶν τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Τούτους καὶ ὁ Κύριος μακαρίζει λέγων· Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι· οὐχ οἱ πένητες κατὰ τὴν περισσίαν, ἀλλ’ οἱ τὴν πτωχείαν ἐκ ψυχῆς προελόμενοι. Οὐδὲν γὰρ τῶν ἀπροαιρέτων μακαριστόν. Διότι πᾶσα ἀρετὴ, μάλιστα δὲ αὕτη πρὸ πάντων, τῷ ἐκουσίῳ χαρακτηρίζεται. Οὗτος οὖν, φησὶν, ὁ πτωχὸς ἐκέκραξε. Τῇ δεικτικῇ φωνῇ ἐπὶ τὸν πτωχεύοντα κατὰ Θεὸν, καὶ πεινῶντα, καὶ διψῶντα, καὶ γυμνητεύοντα, τὴν διάνοιάν σου προκαλεῖται. “Οὗτος ὁ πτωχός,” μονουχὶ δακτύλῳ δεικνύς. Οὗτος ὁ μαθητὴς Χριστοῦ. Δυνατὸν καὶ εἰς Χριστὸν ἀνάξαι τὸν λόγον, ὅς, πλούσιος ὢν τῇ φύσει, διότι πάντα τὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς αὐτοῦ ἐστὶ, δι’ ἡμᾶς ἐπτώχευσεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς τῇ ἐκείνου πτωχείᾳ πλουτήσωμεν. Σχεδὸν γὰρ παντὸς ἔργου τοῦ προάγοντος ἐπὶ τὸν μακαρισμὸν αὐτὸς ἤρξεν ὁ Κύριος, παράδειγμα τοῖς μανθάνουσιν ἐαυτὸν προτιθεῖς.

72 In *ep. 286*, Basil mentions the theft of cheap cloaks belonging to *ptochoi anthropoi*. This has often been construed as a theft of garments gathered for distribution to beggars, but Basil was referring to the cloaks of rural deputy bishops (*chorepiscopoi*) who had gathered for a meeting. Thus, rather than attesting a philanthropic stockpile of clothing, the letter exemplifies Basil’s ideological application of the term “*ptochoi*” to fellow Christian clerics.

73 Basil of Caesarea, *r. brev.* 205 (PG 31:1217): οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, οἵτινες οὐ δι’ ἄλλην τινὰ αἰτίαν ἐπτώχευσαν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν διδασκαλίαν τοῦ Κυρίου εἰπόντος [Matt. 19:21]. . . . Ἐὰν δέ τις, καὶ τὴν ὁπωσούν συμβάσας πτωχείαν καταδεξάμενος, κυβερνήσῃ πρὸς τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὡς ὁ Λάζαρος οὐδὲ οὗτος τοῦ μακαρισμοῦ ἀλλότριος.

74 On the tradition that Lazarus was leprosy, see Holman, *Hungry Are Dying* (n. 7 above), 161, and L. Demaitre, *Leprosy in Premodern Medicine: A Malady of the Whole Body* (Baltimore, 2007), 80–81. On Job’s leprosy, see Gascou, “L’Éléphantisis” (n. 20 above), 279n.48.

75 Palladius of Helenopolis, *Lausiaca History* 21.4 (Butler, *Lausiaca History* [n. 38 above], 64): Χάρισαί μοι ὑπομονὴν τῆς τοῦτου ὑπηρεσίας.

76 B. Dalman, ed., *Saint Daniel of Scetis*, Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 10 (Uppsala, 2007), 118: ἐδόξασε τὸν Θεὸν τὸν παρέχοντα τοιαύτην ὑπομονὴν τῷ γέροντι οὕτως ὑπηρετεῖν τῷ λελαβημένῳ.

Athenagoras once lived in Pachomius's monastery, where he was given a separate cell but otherwise participated in the communal liturgies and labors, despite the fact that weaving the sharp palms caused his hands to bleed. Eventually someone persuaded him to anoint his hands with oil. Learning this, Pachomius reproached him for ameliorating an affliction that divine providence had imposed on him for the profit of his soul. Athenagoras therefore dedicated himself to a year of penance, after which Pachomius sent him around to all the monasteries in the confederation to furnish "an example and foundation to the brothers in the way that he gratefully bore the weight of his grievous infirmity."⁷⁷

Emphasizing physical afflictions, ostracism, and shame, such stories provided vivid exemplars for monks needing encouragement to bear social and ascetic trials of their own. Barsanuphius recommended Eulogius's example to a monastic elder who suffered from both a dire illness and the noxious presence of an insensitive disciple who shared his cell in sixth-century Palestine.⁷⁸ Yet we should not assume such stories were entirely fictional or without basis in monastic practice. While preaching at Antioch in the late fourth century, John Chrysostom refers to monks "attending the wounds of lepers" as if that were a fairly common activity that monks pursued in the fourth century for the sake of humility.⁷⁹ If we accept that the residents of the Basilias whom Basil calls "attendants of the divine" in his letter to Governor Helias were indeed monks, then we must also accept that Basil's Place was a leprosarium where monks helped lepers who were "ptochoi in body" become, like them, "ptochoi in spirit." We may speculate that each group was expected to edify and inspire the other with examples of humility, endurance, and forbearance.⁸⁰ In a sermon on Psalm 14, Basil advises those

entrusted with "stewardship of attending those in need" to reserve their brotherly love for "those who had learned to bear their affliction with patience."⁸¹ Although it cannot be proven, it is possible that this advice was addressed to monastic stewards within the Basilias itself.

The foregoing reveals that the Basilias was an innovative project, though not in the ways usually imagined: it was not a hospital or a homeless shelter, but a monastic leprosarium.⁸² Central to its foundation was Basil's concern with improving the lot of those who had both voluntarily and involuntarily fallen into a state of ptocheia. But it is clear from his writings reviewed above that he deemed some ptochoi more worthy than others and often used the words *ptochos* and *ptochēia* in a more particular sense than is conveyed by such English translations as "beggar" or "destitute poverty." Monasticism aside, what did the words *ptochos* and *ptochēia* mean, conceptually, to him?

To Be Brought Low: A Neglected Meaning of Ptocheia

Here we may begin with the observations of Évelyne Patlagean. As Patlagean explains in her seminal monograph *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance, 4^e–7^e siècles*, ancient Greek writers primarily use two words to describe poverty or people in a state of poverty: *penia* (*penes/penetes*) and *ptochēia* (*ptochos/ptochoi*). These words have different etymological roots and, for classical authors, significant conceptual differences. To describe a lack of material resources that resulted in a person needing to work for a living, *penia* was normally used. Cognate with words for physical toil or labor (*poneo, ponos*), it described the relative penury of the working poor, i.e., paupers—the vast majority of people in antiquity. But to describe a lack of means that resulted in complete indigence and passivity, *ptochēia* was used. Cognate with words for cowering or cringing (*ptusso/ptosso*), it described someone stricken, disabled, or deprived. The civic discourse of classical literature tends to focus on the relative penia of ordinary

77 *Paralip.* 35–36; F. Halkin, ed., *Le Corpus athénien de saint Pachome*, Cahiers d'Orientalisme 2 (Geneva, 1982), 161: πρὸς τὸ τύπον καὶ θεμέλιον τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς παραγίνεσθαι διὰ τὸ εὐχαρίστως φέρειν τὴν βαρεῖαν ἐκείνην τοῦ πάθους ἀσθένειαν.

78 Barsanuphius and John, *quest. et resp.* 90. Cf. *Apophth. patr.*, ser. alph. Agathon 30; ser. anon. 260, 263.

79 John Chrysostom, *In Mt.* 32.3 (PG 58:671): ὁ μὲν θεραπεύει τραύματα τῶν λώβην ἔχόντων.

80 Of course there might have been other facets of this program. To illustrate the philanthropy of a Syrian hermit named Thalassius, Theodoret describes how he collected men whom blindness had reduced to begging, built refuges for them next to his hut, and taught them how to praise God by continuously singing hymns: *Hist. rel.* 22.7.

81 Basil of Caesarea, *In Ps.* 14 (PG 29:264): καὶ ἡ περὶ τὴν θεραπείαν τῶν δεομένων οἰκονομία . . . τὸ δὲ συμπαθεῖς καὶ φιλάδελφον ἐπιδεικνυμένους, ἐν τοῖς μεθ' ὑπομονῆς τὴν θλίψιν φέρειν δεδιδαγμένοις.

82 Rousseau anticipates this conclusion by noting, in *Basil* (n. 4 above), 144, that "all such references suggest that the 'new city' was seen as a centre of religious formation almost as much as a refuge for those in distress."

citizens, often classified in the Roman era as *penetes*; it was especially used in the civic discourse of classical literature (and later Christian sermons) when authors want to draw a socioeconomic contrast between “the rich and the poor.” The New Testament, however, uses *ptochēia* and *ptochoi* almost exclusively (38 out of 39 instances). Later Christian usage often blurred these two traditions, partly because Hellenistic translators of Hebrew scriptures frequently paired *penia* and *ptochēia*, apparently synonymously, to render Hebrew words for poverty in the Septuagint, and partly because classically trained Christian authorities instinctively used classical conventions when preaching or writing. Nonetheless, in nonclassical Christian genres, such as liturgical hymns and hagiography, *ptochēia* and *ptochoi* prevailed, and according to Patlagean, classically trained Christians deliberately chose them to promote almsgiving because they conjured absolute passivity and a more dire need for outside mercy and aid. Hence, she explains, the cringing *ptochos* became the universal symbol and focus of Christian compassion in early Byzantium.⁸³

Patlagean’s observations are accurate as far as they go. Yet many scholars have taken them to mean that Christian authorities simply used the words *ptochēia* and *ptochoi* to refer to destitute poor people or to beggars in general. Early Christian usage, however, was often more nuanced than that. Indeed Patlagean fails to include in her survey any discussion of the Beatitude phrase “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3) or other New Testament passages (e.g., 2 Corinthians 8:9: Christ “became a *ptochos* for your sake although he was rich, so that you might be enriched by his *ptochēia*”), perhaps because she did not consider these scriptural or theological notions of *ptochēia* to be relevant to a historical study of actual poverty in the early Byzantine era. In any case the result is that she does not examine patristic commentaries that seek to clarify how a

ptochos differed from a *penes* for Christian readers of the Septuagint in the third and fourth centuries.

The earliest such commentary is a fragmentary exegesis on the Book of Psalms by the Christian polymath Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185–254). To explain the difference between a *ptochos* and a *penes* in the Septuagint verse “From the humiliation of the *ptochos* and the groaning of the *penes*, I will now arise” (LXX Psalm 11:6). Origen apparently drew on even earlier, unknown authorities. “They say,” he writes, “that the *ptochos* is someone who has fallen from wealth, while the *penes* earns his livelihood from toil.” Origen then adduces other Old and New Testament Greek passages to defend this interpretation:

Scripture says, “the rich became *ptochoi*” (LXX Psalm 33:11) and “we became exceedingly *ptochoi*” (LXX Psalm 78:8) and concerning our Saviour, “He became a *ptochos* for our [*sic*] sake although He was rich, so that we [*sic*] might be enriched by His *ptochēia*” (2 Corinthians 8:9).⁸⁴

A few generations later Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 260–340) posited a similar distinction to explain a different Septuagint verse: “You deliver . . . the *ptochos* and *penes* from those who despoil him” (LXX Psalm 34:10). Having been trained in Origen’s works, Eusebius likewise affirmed that “a *ptochos* is one who has come into *ptochēia* by completely falling from the wealth he had, while a *penes* is one who obtains the things he needs to live by toil [*ponos*].”⁸⁵ These definitions were repeated verbatim by the Alexandrian exegete Didymus the Blind (ca. 340–399) in his own commentary on this verse at the end of the fourth century.⁸⁶ But most important for us is the distinction that Basil himself

83 Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique* (n. 39 above), 26–35. Scholars have subsequently invoked modern distinctions between structural and conjunctural poverty to clarify the ancient distinctions. Unfortunately this has not been done consistently, partly because the effort is inherently problematic: was the penury of the late Roman working poor simply conjunctural (as sometimes claimed) if many had no access to land? Is it correct or helpful to identify (as is often done) the *ptochēia* of widows, orphans, or the elderly as structural? I am inclined to regard *penia* as structural poverty and *ptochēia* as conjunctural poverty, but given the complexities discussed below, I have chosen not to employ these distinctions here.

84 Origen, *fr. in Ps.* 111.6 (PG 12:1201B): Φασὶ δὲ πτωχὸν τὸν ἐκπεσόντα πλούτου· πένητα δὲ τὸν ἐκ πόνου τὰ πρὸς τὸν βίον περιποιούμενον. Λέγει δὲ ἡ Γραφή· “Πλούσιοι ἐπτώχευσαν,” καὶ τό· “Ἐπτώχευσάμεν σφόδρα.” καὶ περὶ τοῦ Σωτῆρος, “ὃς ἐπτώχευσε δι’ ἡμᾶς πλούσιος ὢν, ἵνα” ἡμεῖς “πλουτήσωμεν τῇ αὐτοῦ πτωχείᾳ.”

85 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Comm. in Ps.* (PG 23:300): Ἐπιστήσεις δὲ εἰ ἕτερός ἐστιν ὁ πτωχὸς παρὰ τὸν πένητα . . . πτωχὸν εἶναι πτωχέυσαντα τῷ ἀποπεπτωκέναι οὐ εἶχε πλούτου, καὶ πένητα τῷ μετὰ πόνον περιποιεῖν τὰ πρὸς τὸ διαζῆν.

86 Didymus the Blind, *fr. in Ps.* 331; E. Mühlenberg, ed., *Psalmenkommentare aus der Katenenüberlieferung*, vol. 1, PTS 15 (Berlin, 1975), 289: πτωχὸν εἶναι πτωχέυσαντα τῷ ἀποπεπτωκέναι οὐ ἔσχεν πλούτου καὶ πένητα τῷ μετὰ πόνου περιποιεῖν τὰ πρὸς τὸ διαζῆν.

independently wrote and offered in his monastic rules. When asked about the apparent use of *ptochos* and *penes* as synonyms in another Septuagint verse, “The *ptochos* and the *penes* shall praise Thy name” (LXX Psalm 73:21), Basil explains: “Remembering that [Paul] said of the Lord, ‘For your sake He became a *ptochos*, though He was rich’ [2 Corinthians 8:9], I reckon a *ptochos* to be someone who has come down from wealth into neediness, and a *penes* to be someone who existed in need from the start and conducts himself in that circumstance pleasingly to the Lord.”⁸⁷

Two points must be observed. First, while recognizing that the scriptural usage of *ptochia* refers to a state of material need, these authorities each further define it as an impoverishment or lowering of status (*ptochousanta*) that resulted from a fall or descent (*ekpesonta, katelthon, to apopectokenai*) from some former state of prosperity. This is a more nuanced and specific conception of *ptochia* than Patlagean recognizes. It is also a conception that is not limited to learned Christians like Origen, Eusebius, Basil, or Didymus. Although Patlagean is certainly correct, from a modern perspective, to claim that *ptochia* was etymologically derived from the Greek verb for cowering or cringing (*ptusso/ptosso*), ancient etymologists held broader views. For example, the first- or second-century grammarian Ammonius claims that “a *ptochos* is a beggar who has completely fallen [*ekpeptokos*], or [is called *ptochos*] from his cringing.”⁸⁸ In other words, although Ammonius (correctly) believes it possible that *ptochos* derives from *ptosso* (a derivation he supports by citing Homer), he first presumes (incorrectly, according to modern etymologists) that it was connected to *peptoka*, the perfect active indicative form of *pipto*, “I fall.” That he presents this explanation first without further elaboration suggests that he knew his

contemporaries took it for granted. Indeed classical authors from Herodotus onward explicitly identify *ptochia* with a fall from prosperity.⁸⁹

Thus Origen, Eusebius, Basil, and Didymus could have cited ancient etymology in addition to scriptural exempla to uphold their notion of *ptochia* as a state of “fallenness” or ruin. And, contrary to modern claims, these authorities did not consider such a *ptochos* to be “more contemptible” or “less worthy” than a *penes*.⁹⁰ Neither the definitions nor the citations provided by Origen and Basil support this view. If anything, it was the *penes* who Basil believed needed to make some extra effort to be deserving of divine succour. Such a person, Basil states, had to “conduct himself in his circumstances pleasingly to the Lord.” This is consonant with his remark that anyone might be blessed if he accepted the *ptochia* that had befallen him and, like Lazarus, “conducted himself according to God’s will.”⁹¹ For Basil, at least, just such a *ptochos*—and *only* such a *ptochos*—could hope to be counted in the blessed ranks of the *ptochoi* in spirit.

Far from disapproval of *ptochoi*, what we find here is the articulation of an early Byzantine notion of “the deserving poor.” Since these Christian authorities were all raised in Asia Minor and the eastern Mediterranean, it is intriguing to note that a similar notion had already emerged in Jewish communities of this region during the second and third centuries. In this era, as Gregg Gardner has recently explained in detail, rabbinic leaders devised a two-tiered system of poverty relief in

87 Basil of Caesarea, *r. brev.* 262 (PG 31:1260CD): Τῆς Γραφῆς ἐν τοῖς ἐπαινουμένοις τιθείσης τὴν πτωχείαν καὶ τὴν πενίαν, ὡς ἐν τῷ, “Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί.” καὶ ἐν τῷ, “Τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν τῶν πενήτων εἰσήκουσε Κύριος.” καὶ πάλιν. “Πτωχὸς καὶ πέννης αἰνέσουσι τὸ ὄνομά σου.” τίς ἐστὶν ἡ διαφορὰ πτωχείας καὶ πενίας; . . . Μεμνημένος τοῦ Ἀποστόλου εἰπόντος περὶ τοῦ Κυρίου, “Ὅτι δι’ ἡμᾶς ἐπτώχευσε, πλούσιος ὢν,” λογίζομαι, ὅτι πτωχὸς μὲν ἐστὶν ὁ ἀπὸ πλούτου κατελθὼν εἰς ἐνδεϊαν· πέννης δὲ ὁ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐν ἐνδείᾳ ὢν καὶ εὐαρέστως τῷ Κυρίῳ κυβερνήσας τὴν τοιαύτην περίστασιν.

88 Ammonius Grammaticus, *Diff.* 387; K. Nickau, ed., *Ammonii De adfinium vocabulorum differentia* (Leipzig, 1964), 100: πέννης καὶ πτωχὸς διαφέρει. πέννης μὲν γὰρ ὁ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐργάζεσθαι καὶ πονεῖν ποριζόμενος τὸν βίον· πτωχὸς δὲ ὁ ἐπαίτης ὁ τοῦ ἔχειν ἐκπεπτωκώς, ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ πτώσσειν.

89 E.g., Herodotus 3.14, C. Hude, ed. (Oxford, 1927): ὃς ἐκ πολλῶν τε καὶ εὐδαιμόνων ἐκπεσὼν ἐς πωχηίην, Lysias, *In Diog.* 10 [506], ed. Hude (Oxford 1911): ἀθλίως ἐκπεπτωκότες . . . εἰς πτωχείαν καταστάντας. For the etymological issues, see H. Frisk, *Griechische Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1970), 2:613–14, and P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris, 1974), 3:948–949, both of whom accept a distant connection between *πτήσσω* and *πέπτωκα*. I thank Christopher Jones, Professor Emeritus of Classics at Harvard University, for challenging me on these points and Leslie Threaght, Professor Emeritus of Classics at University of California, Berkeley, for clarifying them.

90 E.g., Holman, *Hungry Are Dying* (n. 7 above), 6 (“Basil . . . further distinguishes the two on moral grounds, the *ptochos* as the more contemptible”), followed by Horden, “Poverty, Charity” (n. 4 above), 718. Although Holman (6n21) correctly notes that Origen cites Old Testament passages in which God is punishing the rich by making them poor, the inclusion of Christ’s example of *ptochia* indicates that these Old Testament examples were meant to illustrate impoverishment, not punishment or moral inferiority.

91 See n. 73 above.

Palestine that explicitly privileged distressed gentlefolk. While ensuring that any Jewish beggar would receive at least something each day at communal soup kitchens, the system they devised reserved most of its charitable resources for people who had been demonstrably brought down by a reversal of fortune. Sharing the same aristocratic concern for honor that preoccupied their Greco-Roman counterparts, rabbis of this era considered it imperative to minimize the shame and embarrassment of such reversals.⁹² Likewise the Cappadocian Fathers, while promoting philanthropy toward the poor in general, focused special attention on “the fallen,” calling on Christians to aid those *ptochoi* in particular who had been brought low or degraded by an unexpected change in their bodily, material, or social circumstances.

“Love of Ptochoi”

This priority is expressed in the three sermons that Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa composed on the theme “love of *ptochoi*” (*philoptochia*). In all three sermons their choice of diction generally adheres to classical and scriptural conventions, using *penetes* to distinguish poor people from rich people while reserving *ptochoi* to describe those in special need of mercy and almsgiving. Otherwise the two preachers offer distinct treatments of the theme: Gregory of Nazianzus dwells much more on the social responsibilities that came with God-given wealth, while Gregory of Nyssa focuses on the theological bond created by the Incarnation between God and human beings. Yet both culminate their sermons with exhortations for Christians to aid those who have suffered ruin or have otherwise “fallen.” “Neglect not the fallen,” says Gregory of Nazianzus; “Do not pass mercilessly by someone who has collapsed,” concludes Gregory of Nyssa.⁹³ Most significantly, both put forth these requests after making a case for taking pity on lepers.

These sermons represent the only sustained treatments of lepers to have survived from sermons of Christian antiquity. Dionysios Stathakopoulos and Susan Wessel have separately explained that the two Gregories, knowing their listeners’ abhorrence of lepers, sought to make these untouchables in particular seem touchable, hoping thereby to overcome the prejudices that separated Christian donors from any proper object of their compassion.⁹⁴ No doubt that is true. Both of them describe in detail the horrendous social ostracism that lepers routinely suffered in late Roman Cappadocia. Such was their shame and abuse, says Gregory of Nazianzus, that most would prefer to hide in the hills than come back and beg in the cities; yet their condition forced them to return and grovel for mercy.⁹⁵ Yet for these two Cappadocians, such leprous beggars represented more than mere instruments of Christian redemption. Both Gregories present them as people who had fallen from a better state of existence. Due to the disease, these “wretched remnants of former human beings,” as Gregory of Nazianzus calls them, could “barely comprehend who they had been or where they had once come from.” Although some could still remember how they had lived before losing their families, friends, and faces, they were nevertheless reduced to calling out their parents or their children’s names to establish their identities: “they do this because the imprint of how they used to look cannot be recognized.”⁹⁶ According to Gregory of Nyssa, each leper “appears to be something other than the living creature he had once been accustomed to be.” Disease had changed them into beasts: “these people, who yesterday stood upright and looked at the sky, are here today, bending to the earth, walking on four feet, practically changed into animals . . . as if they had changed in nature . . . losing the traits of their species to be

92 G. E. Gardner, *The Origins of Organized Charity in Rabbinic Judaism* (Cambridge and New York, 2015), 110–63, and idem, “Who Is Rich? The Poor in Early Rabbinic Judaism,” *JQR* 104 (2014): 515–36; cf. G. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine, First Three Centuries C.E.* (Berkeley, 1990), 195–97.

93 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 14.27 (PG 35:893A): σὺ δὲ πέσοντα μὴ παρίδης. Gregory of Nyssa, *paup.* 2.12 (Van Heck, *GNO* 9.1 [n. 52 above], 126): μὴ παρέλθῃς ἀνηλεῶς τὸν προσπταίσαντα.

94 D. Stathakopoulos, “Prêcher les émotions incarnées: Évêques, mendiants et leurs publics dans l’Antiquité tardive,” *Médiévales* 61 (2011): 25–38 and S. Wessel, *Passion and Compassion in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, 2016), 32–64. I thank my anonymous *DOP* reviewer and Georgia Frank for alerting me to these studies.

95 Gregory of Nyssa, *paup.* 2.5, 12 (Van Heck, *GNO* 9.1, 115, 125); Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 14.12 (PG 35:873A): αἰσχύνονται μὲν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους διὰ τὴν συμφορὰν.

96 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 14.10 (PG 35:869A): μήθ’ οἷτινές ποτε ἦσαν, μηδὲ ὅθεν εἰσὶ μικροῦ γινωσκόμενοι· μᾶλλον δὲ τῶν ποτε ἀνθρώπων ἄθλια λείψανα . . . καὶ τοῦτο πράττουσιν, οὐ γὰρ ἔχουσι τῷ παλαιῷ χαρακτῆρι γινώσκεσθαι.

transformed into monsters.” No other living creature, he affirms, ever suffered “such a profound reversal.”⁹⁷

As we see in these Cappadocian sermons, lepers personified a radical reversal of fortune that called for a philanthropic Christian response. Gregory of Nazianzus signaled this symbolic significance at the very start of his sermon. After surveying various examples of *ptochoi* (in each case listing not merely people who were poor, but people who had been forced into poverty through various types of depredation or loss), he states that those who were suffering “contrary to dignity” should especially be pitied. Then he turns to the main subject of his sermon, the plight of lepers:

We must open our hearts to all *ptochoi* who suffer distress for whatever reason . . . whether on account of being widows or orphans, or being exiled from their fatherland, or through the cruelty of their masters, abuses of magistrates, inhumanity of tax collectors, depredations of brigands, greed of robbers, confiscations, or shipwrecks. All are similarly to be pitied, looking to our hands as we do to God’s for what we ourselves need. And among these, those who suffer distress contrary to their dignity are to be pitied more than those who are habituated to misfortune—but especially those who waste away with the sacred disease.⁹⁸

Here Gregory of Nazianzus introduces lepers to his congregation not merely as examples of *ptochoi*, but as examples *par excellence* of the deserving poor.

97 Gregory of Nyssa, *paup.* 2.5, 6 (Van Heck, *GNO* 9.1, 115, 116; trans. Holman, *Hungry Are Dying*, 201): οὐδὲν τούτων ἔκ τινος συμφορᾶς τοιαύτης εἰς ἑτερόν τινα χαρακτῆρα μετεκινήθη.

98 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 14.5 (PG 35:864C–865A): Πᾶσι μὲν δὴ πτωχοῖς ἀνοικτέον τὰ σπλάγχνα, καὶ τοῖς καθ’ ἡντιναοὺν αἰτίαν κακοπαθοῦσι . . . εἴτε διὰ χρεῖαν χρήζοιεν ταύτης, εἴτε δι’ ὀρφανίαν, εἴτε ἀποξένωσιν πατρίδος, εἴτε ὀμότητα δεσποτῶν, εἴτε ἀρχόντων θράσος, εἴτε φορολόγων ἀπανθρωπίαν, εἴτε ληστῶν μαιφονίαν, εἴτε κλεπτῶν ἀπληστίαν, εἴτε δήμευσιν, εἴτε ναυάγιον· πάντες γὰρ ὁμοίως ἐλεεινοί, καὶ οὕτω βλέποντες εἰς τὰς ἡμετέρας χεῖρας, ὡς ἡμεῖς εἰς τὰς τοῦ Θεοῦ, περὶ ὧν ἂν δεώμεθα· καὶ τούτων αὐτῶν οἱ παρ’ ἄξιαν κακοπαθοῦντες, τῶν ἐν ἔθει τοῦ δυστυχεῖν ὄντων ἐλεεινότεροι· ἐξαιρέτως δὲ τοῖς ὑπὸ τῆς ἱεραῆς νόσου διεφθαρμένοις. Nazianzus is the first Christian known to have recast leprosy as “the sacred disease”: J. Lascaratos, “The Second ‘Sacred Disease’: Earlier Euphemistic Equivalent of ‘Hansen’s Disease,’” *International Journal of Dermatology* 35 (1996): 376–78.

Furthermore, to heighten the drama and pathos of lepers, the two Gregories not only describe their pitiful condition, ostracism, and shame, but also insist that whoever suffered leprosy had done nothing to deserve such misfortune. Contrary to popular opinion, they were not literally accursed—leprosy was not a punishment brought on by any sin or act of divine wrath. Instead, the Cappadocians argued, it attested the inconstancy of human prosperity and the danger of thinking that something as familiar as one’s own flesh was actually solid and dependable. Lepers, Gregory of Nazianzus explains, had been “betrayed by their lowly, mischievous, untrustworthy body.”⁹⁹ He insists that since leprosy arose from the corruptible nature of all human flesh a similar fate could befall anyone. Indeed, the fact that anyone might experience such a *ptochia* meant that they should be all the more prompt to show any such *ptochoi* some mercy. “For since all people possess one nature and no one has any reliable anchor of continuous prosperity,” says Gregory of Nyssa, “it behooves us to ever remember the Gospel admonition to do [unto others] what we would want [them] to do for us” (Matthew 7:12).¹⁰⁰

As noted above, no other sermons from this period focus so exclusively on lepers. Why did these two Cappadocians take up the topic? Even if we cannot embrace the claim that they were addressing a sudden outbreak of leprosy, we may agree with most scholars that they were preaching in support of Basil’s project. It is usually assumed that Gregory of Nyssa composed his sermons in the 380s, using Gregory of Nazianzus’s sermon as a model. While Gregory of Nazianzus is usually thought to have written his sermon to raise funds during the construction of the Basilias in the late 360s or 370s (a view also assumed by Gregory’s ancient hagiographer, Gregory the Priest), there is no positive indication that he wrote it to be delivered at the Basilias itself, and some have discounted this possibility due to the sermon’s length and lack of reference to the facility

99 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 14.6 (PG 35:865AC): προδεδομένοις ὑπὸ τοῦ μοχθηροῦ, καὶ ταπεινοῦ, καὶ ἀπίστου τούτου σώματος.

100 Gregory of Nyssa, *paup.* 2.12 (Van Heck, 126): ἐπειδὴ γὰρ μὴ φύσει διοικεῖται πᾶν τὸ ἀνθρώπινον καὶ οὐδὲν ἔχει οὐδεὶς τῆς διηνεκοῦς εὐπραγίας βέβαιόν τι παρ’ ἑαυτῷ τὸ ἐνέχυρον, διὰ παντὸς προσήκει μεμνήσθαι τοῦ εὐαγγελικοῦ παραγγέλματος τοῦ συμβουλευόντος, ἅπερ ἂν θέλωμεν ἵνα ποιῶσιν ἡμῖν οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ταῦτα ποιεῖν. Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 14.8 and 18 (PG 35:868B, 880C).

by name.¹⁰¹ Yet Gregory's sermon on "love of ptochoi" is no lengthier than his funeral oration for Basil, and early Byzantine sermons, like modern sermons, rarely mention or specify the place where they were delivered. It is therefore reasonable to speculate that Gregory delivered it at an event (perhaps an inaugural event) in the central martyrrium at Basil's Place. Such an occasion would explain its references to an ongoing martyr festival, to the nearby sound of lepers groaning outside the church, and to the opportunity for listeners to donate bandages and "philosophize" with lepers about their "infirmity" (Gregory repeatedly uses the same oblique word that Basil used to describe the malady in his letter to Governor Helias).¹⁰² In any case, Gregory used the occasion and example of lepers to articulate a basic philanthropic principle: Christians must pity all ptochoi who suffer distress, but should prioritize those suffering "contrary to their dignity" over those who were "habituated to misfortune."¹⁰³ How was this principle relevant to Basil's project?

Basil's Basiliad and "the Ptocheia Called Blessed by Christ"

I began this study with Gregory of Nazianzus's description of the Basiliad as a place "where disease is regarded philosophically, misfortune considered blessed, and compassion put to the test." Gregory prefaces this description in his funeral oration by observing, "philanthropia, ptochotropheia, and the assistance of human infirmity are good things."¹⁰⁴ I trust this study has made

the significance of these words clearer and less banal than they might otherwise seem. The Basiliad was an audacious Christian project that placed a leprosarium at the core of a monastic foundation, sequestering monks among lepers and lepers among monks, making the "ptochoi in body" live with the "ptochoi in spirit" for the mutual support and edification of both. For citizens of Caesarea it must have seemed a strange and provocative project indeed, especially coming from an aristocrat who, though a Christian bishop, had received and excelled at the most traditional education available in the Greco-Roman world.

Having claimed that ideological concerns rather than practical humanitarianism motivated Basil to undertake this project, it remains for me to substantiate that claim. Let me start by returning to Basil's identification of his institution as a ptochotropheion, i.e., a place founded to nourish and foster people in their state of ptocheia. I have mentioned that such facilities had already arisen in the region of Pontus and in connection with a bishop named Eustathius of Sebaste. As noted above, Eustathius is a shadowy, fourth-century figure. Jean Gribomont believed he was responsible for promoting an early form of monasticism that focused on charitable work in urban areas, exemplified by the activities of his former disciple Aërius and of another disciple named Marathonius, who is said to have combined supervision of facilities called ptocheia with the supervision of Constantinopolitan monasteries in the 350s. Given the association of Basil's own family with Eustathius in Pontus and the fact that Basil continued to maintain ties with him during the first five years of his episcopate in Caesarea, I accept Gribomont's view that Basil's Basiliad owed much to this little known figure.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, records from the Council of Gangara held in the region of Paphlagonia in Asia Minor in the 350s attest that some of his disciples claimed the title of "poor in spirit" from the Beatitudes for themselves. Evidently they considered this phrase and its notion of Christian ptocheia as central to their sense of identity. From Epiphanius we learn that some of his disciples, including Aërius, thought that Eustathius betrayed his

101 Holman, *Hungry Are Dying*, 143–45; for detailed discussion, J. McGuckin, *St Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (New York, 2001), 148–51, and A. Meredith, "The Three Cappadocians on Beneficence: A Key to Their Audiences," in *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics*, ed. M. B. Cunningham and P. Allen (Leiden, Boston, and Köln, 1998), 100–101.

102 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 14.15 (PG 35:876BC): τὰς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν . . . ἐκ τῆς ἰσῆς ἀσθενείας μαθοῦσα; 14.27 (PG 35:892D–893C): ἐπικουρήσον, ὄρεξον τροφήν, ὄρεξον ῥάκος, προσένεγκε φάρμακον, κατάρδησον τραύματα, ἐρώτησόν τι περὶ τῆς συμφορᾶς, περὶ καρτερίας φιλοσόφησον, θάρσησον, πρόσελθε. For references to a festival occasion and the proximity of lepers, 9, 13, 40 (868C, 873C, 909C).

103 See n. 98 above.

104 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 43.63.1 (Bernardi, *Grégoire de Nazianze* [n. 1 above], 260): Καλὸν φιλανθρωπία καὶ πτωχοτροφία καὶ τὸ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ἀσθενείας βοήθημα.

105 See J. Gribomont, "Un aristocrate révolutionnaire, évêque et moine: s. Basile," *Augustinianum* 17 (1977): 177–99, and idem, "Saint Basile et le monachisme enthousiaste," *Irénikon* 53 (1980): 123–44; challenged by Brown, *Poverty and Leadership* (n. 4 above), 36–38. On Eustathius and Marathonius, see S. Elm, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1994), 106–112.

principles by embracing wealth when he became bishop of Sebaste.¹⁰⁶ We might wonder if Basil hoped his construction of the Basiliads would allay similar suspicions after his own ordination. But since we really know nothing about what Eustathius taught, invoking his name or the actions of his more radical associates does little to clarify Basil's motives and ideas. Fortunately, some illuminating evidence can be found in Basil's own writings.

As we have seen, Basil also conceptualized monasticism as "the ptocheia made blessed by Christ." Although Jesus does bless the "ptochoi in spirit" in the Beatitudes, this understanding of monasticism was also grounded in Paul's description of Christ as one who, "though rich, became a ptochos" in 2 Corinthians 8:9. An exhaustive survey by Pius Angenstenberger reveals the impact of this phrase on patristic imaginations from the second to the sixth century.¹⁰⁷ By casting Christ in the humble guise of a divine *déclassé* or a distressed gentleman writ large, Paul provided aristocratic Christian authorities with an ideological basis both for renouncing worldly status to pursue higher religious goals, and for privileging those ptochoi who had "come down" in worldly status as preferred objects of philanthropic care. Thus Basil urged an elder to persevere in the hardships of monastic life "in imitation of Him, Who for our sake became a ptochos."¹⁰⁸

Like other ascetic authorities of the day, Basil believed that the sacrifices made by such "ptochoi in spirit" enriched all humanity and helped fulfill the divine plan. Together with other members of his family, Basil had retired from the trappings of aristocratic life long before his ordination to pursue a more simple, spiritual life at the family's Pontic estate. During this time his brothers and sisters dedicated themselves not only to

practicing Christian "philosophy," but also to sharing the work of their servants and caring for sick old men in the area.¹⁰⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus notes in his funeral oration for Basil how remarkable it was that a "scion of good family stock" should be seen embracing lepers and thereby "sharing in their humiliation."¹¹⁰ Indeed, most late Roman aristocrats would have considered Basil's material austerities and interactions with sick people to be a step down for someone of his background. Such behavior would have struck them as quite "contrary to dignity," as Gregory put it, even if adopted voluntarily in the name of Christian philosophy. Gregory adds that Basil's involvement with lepers proved he did not deserve his reputation as a proud and haughty man.¹¹¹ Yet Basil seems to have been more defensive about his way of life than has been recognized. To expound the verse "you put the faces of the holy ptochoi to shame" (LXX Isaiah 3:15), his *Commentary on Isaiah* alludes to "wicked lay leaders who, instead of calling people blessed who have made themselves ptochoi, slander, scorn, and disparage their praiseworthy humility."¹¹² Elsewhere he tells monks not to offer visitors food that was any more elaborate than their usual fare "out of shame for the poverty called blessed by Christ," lest it suggest they felt ashamed about their humble penury, like "people of the world." He advises that they use such occasions instead to instruct visitors in Christian priorities and the "ptocheia borne without shame for Christ's sake." If a guest ridiculed them, then they should never host him again.¹¹³

109 On his family's ascetic community, see Elm, *Virgins*, 78–105. Cf. R. Van Dam, Raymond. "Self-Representation in the Will of Gregory of Nazianzus," *JTS* n.s. 46 (1995): 130: "Basil seems to have given away so much of his wealth that he once wrote that he was supported by friends and relatives because he wanted nothing of his own."

110 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 43.63.6 (Bernardi, *Grégoire de Nazianze*, 264): ὁ εὐγενὴς τε καὶ τῶν εὐ γεγονότων καὶ τὴν δόξαν ὑπέρλαμπρος; 64.1 (266): Ἐστὶ λεπτρὸς μὲν ἀσπάζεσθαι καὶ μέχρι τούτου συνταπεινοῦσθαι.

111 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 43.64, passim.

112 Basil of Caesarea, *Enarr. in Is.* 3.122; G. Garnier, ed., in P. Trevisan, *San Basilio: Commento al profeta Isaia*, Corono Patrum Salesiana 5 (Turin, 1939), 1:345–47: Ἐπεὶ δὲ εἰσὶ τινες πτωχοὶ μακαριζόμενοι, οἱ διὰ τὴν θεοσέβειαν πάντων καταφρονήσαντες καὶ ἐπ' ἐλπίδι τοῦ κατὰ Θεὸν πλούτου τῆς κοσμικῆς περιουσίας ὑπεριδόντες, —οἱ κακῶς προεστῶτες τοῦ λαοῦ, ἀντὶ τοῦ μακαρίζειν τοὺς οὕτω πτωχεύοντας, διαβάλλοντες καὶ ἐξουθενοῦντες καὶ τὴν ἐπαινετὴν αὐτῶν ταπεινοφροσύνην ἐξευτελίζοντες.

113 Basil of Caesarea, *r. fus.* 20 (PG 31:969–972): Ἐπεὶ δὲ τοὺς ἐξωθεν ὁρῶμεν τὸ ταπεινὸν τῆς πενίας αἰσχυνομένους, καὶ ἐπιτηδεύοντας

106 See D. Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 33 (Berkeley, 2002), 100.

107 P. Angenstenberger, *Der reiche und der arme Christus: Die Rezeptionsgeschichte von 2 Kor 8,9 zwischen dem zweiten und dem sechsten Jahrhundert* (Bonn, 1997); cf. Brown, *Poverty and Leadership*, 74–112. The word *ptochos* was used not just of Christ but, in Romans 15: 26 (cf. Galatians 2:10), of the Christian leaders in Jerusalem: τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῶν ἁγίων τῶν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ. For recent discussion of the history behind the category, see P. Brown, *Treasures in Heaven: The Holy Poor in Early Christianity* (Charlottesville and London, 2016). Brown does not discuss the significance of the words *ptochos* or *ptocheia*.

108 Basil of Caesarea, *ep.* 23 (Courtonne, *Saint Basile* [n. 11 above], 1:58): κατὰ μίμησιν τοῦ δι' ἡμᾶς πτωχεύσαντες.

These passages reveal a striking sensitivity to the social discomfort that might befall someone who adopted the life of the “poor in spirit” in his day. Of course, the embarrassment of a fourth-century aristocrat who voluntarily adopted poverty hardly compared to the “shameful existence” (as Aretaeus calls it) of a common leper. Yet it was not until Emperor Theodosius the Great ascended the throne, after Basil’s death, that monasticism started to become fashionable and widely patronized in the late Roman East. In fact the court of Emperor Valens had treated monks with open contempt and violence in precisely the same years that Basil held his episcopate.¹¹⁴ Accordingly, even if Basil’s main purpose in building his ptochotropheion was to elevate the dignity of lepers by making them “poor in spirit,” I propose that he also intended it to affirm the dignity of all the ptochoi who lived there—i.e., its Christian “poor in spirit” more generally.

At any event there should be no doubt that Gregory is correct that Basil’s monument was meant to enshrine the new Christian ideology of ptochotropheia outside Caesarea. Yet, as he points out as well, the Basilias was also inspired by another much older ideology: philanthropia.¹¹⁵ Modern historians agree on this point, but it is important not to take it for granted or fail to appreciate the significance of giving concrete expression to this ideal for fourth-century Christian leaders. The notion of philanthropy as a human (rather than exclusively divine) virtue, although commonplace in classical literature, is not prominent in Christian discourse before the fourth century. During the culture wars of the fourth century, however, it became a contested ideal. For example, Eusebius depicted the imperial contest between Constantine and his pagan colleague Licinius as one between philanthropy and misanthropy,¹¹⁶ while Emperor Julian demanded that his priests should practice philanthropia as a sacred priority, seeing that the “wicked Galileans” owed much of their popularity to their appropriation

of the ideal.¹¹⁷ Conversely, when Christians refused to hand out grain during the Cappadocian famine of 368/370, Basil responded by complaining that “stories of pagan philanthropy are putting us to shame.”¹¹⁸ Evidently it was ideologically important to claim superior philanthropy in the contest between Christian and pagan authorities both before and during Basil’s lifetime. Central to this claim, however, was the recognition that ancient philanthropy meant clemency—extending mercy even to people who did not at first seem to deserve it. As Herbert Hunger long ago demonstrated in his concise survey of classical and Byzantine usage, this ancient meaning of philanthropy was always at the heart of imperial philanthropia.¹¹⁹ Yet it was only after Constantine that classically trained Christian leaders took advantage of its ecumenical implications to urge and justify the extension of mercy to all humans—even to those most seemingly accursed, who lived beyond the pale of the traditional civic and church community. It is no coincidence that Gregory of Nazianzus’s sermon “On Love of Ptochoi” is not only the longest sermon to survive from antiquity on the subject of lepers, but also the longest exposition to survive from antiquity on the ideal and practice of philanthropia. There was probably no other group in antiquity that needed this ideal and practice more. Basil’s Basilias thus stood as a symbol of the Christian extension of philanthropy beyond traditional bounds. How far it inspired the work of other Christian institutions in early Byzantium remains, I believe, a question that would be worth revisiting.

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πάσαν ἀφθονίαν βρωμάτων καὶ πολυτέλειαν, ὅταν τινὰ τῶν ξένων δέχωνται, φοβοῦμαι μὴ καὶ ἡμῶν κατὰ τὸ λανθάνον τὸ αὐτὸ πάθος ἄψηται, καὶ ἐλεγχθῶμεν ἐπαισχυνόμενοι τὴν ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ μακαριζομένην πτωχείαν. . . Ἐναπομεινάτω αὐτῷ ὑπομνήματα Χριστιανῶν τραπέζης, καὶ ἀνεπαισχύντου διὰ Χριστὸν πτωχείας. Εἰ δὲ οὐ προσέξει, ἀλλὰ καταγέλασει, δεῦτερον ἡμῖν οὐκ ἐνοχλήσει.

114 See N. Lenski, “Valens and the Monks: Cudgeling and Conscriptio as a Means of Social Control,” *DOP* 58 (2004): 93–117.

115 See esp. Daley, “Building a New City” (n. 7 above).

116 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History* 10.8–9, *passim*.

117 Julian, *ep.* 89b.305BC. See J. Kabiersch, *Untersuchungen zum Begriff der Philanthropia bei dem Kaiser Julian*, *Klassisch-philologische Studien* 21 (Wiesbaden, 1960), and S. Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome*, *Transformation of the Classical Heritage* 49 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2012), 321–24.

118 Basil of Caesarea, *Homily* 8.8 (PG 31:325A): Αἰδεσθῶμεν Ἑλλήνων φιλόανθρωπα διηγήματα.

119 H. Hunger, “ΦΙΛΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΑ: Eine griechische Wortprägung auf ihrem Wege von Aischylos bis Theodoros Metochites,” *AnzWien* 100 (1963): 1–21; cf. H. Pétré, *Caritas: Étude sur la vocabulaire latin de la charité chrétienne* (Louvain, 1948), 208–11.